

LIFE SUPREME

**by
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FOREWORD

The Holy Quran, the Word of God Almighty, proclaims, as clearly as the sun shines in the sky, that the object of human existence is the cultivation of righteousness. Keeping this ideal in mind I have always endeavoured to make this the theme of my writings despite the fact that I am fully conscious of my own deficiencies.

My prayer is that this humble work will inspire the earnest reader upwards to higher states of righteousness and excellencies of conduct. It will prove of little or no value to the person who merely skips over a few pages, then lays the book down never to open it again. The spirit of rejuvenation which the book is intended to generate in the mind and soul of the reader will become manifest only if every line is absorbed as in this approach lies the secret of its fruition.

Should the reader gain even half as much pleasure and benefit as I have gained from writing this book, then both of us will have been well rewarded.

BASHIR AHMAD ORCHARD

May, 1979

All references in this book are from
the Holy Quran
unless otherwise stated

Some of the chapters of this book have previously been featured as articles in various editions of the *Muslim Herald*, including one which appeared in the *Review of Religions*.

'Verily, the most honoured among you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most righteous among you. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.'
(49:14)

'O ye who believe, be mindful of your duty to Allah in all respects.'
(3:103)

1. DEVELOPING MORAL VIRTUES

Those of you who have visited Edinburgh in Scotland may have observed a massive monument standing beside Princess Street about a hundred yards from Waverly station. This monument was erected in honour and memory of Sir Walter Scott who was a renowned Scottish author and historian of the last century. Whenever I see or visualize this monument I am reminded of his dying words to his son-in-law as he lay on his death bed. He said:

"I have but a minute to speak to you. My dear, be a good man; be virtuous, be religious—be a good man. Nothing else will give you any comfort when you come to lie here."

Although Sir Walter Scott had earned literary fame and had won the admiration of millions of his readers, he realised during the last moments of his life that the most worth-while avocation in life was the acquisition of virtue. He understood a great Islamic truth contained in the Holy Quran:

I have not created the Jinn and the men but that they may worship Me. (51:57)

Worship of God in this verse does not refer only to formal prayer. Its meaning is that we should manifest the attributes of God in all our thoughts, words and deeds. We should glorify Him through the demonstration of moral virtues. This is the purpose of our existence and consequently we should focus our attention on this ideal with earnest devotion. Day by day we should strive to shed virtuous light on every thought we think, in every word we speak or write, in every action we undertake and even in every expression on our face. The following prayer should be a source of inspiration to us:

*O Allah, diffuse light into my heart and ears;
Diffuse light on my eyes and on my tongue;
Diffuse light on my right and on my left;
Diffuse light above me and under me;
Engulf me in Thy light.*

The Holy Quran declares elsewhere that the culmination of virtue should be our foremost aim in life in as much as it elevates us to an

honourable status in the sight of God which is, after all, the ultimate aspiration of every true believer. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

"Verily the most honourable person in the sight of Allah is he who is the most virtuous." (49:14)

The Quran reveals as clear as crystal why we have been created. It declares that we should endeavour to excel in moral virtues. This being so, then why should we give preference to the fulfilment of any other ambition? Indeed, let us have ambitions; but let our highest ambition be the development of moral virtues. Allah has declared that He has ordained fasting during the month of Ramadhan solely as a means of acquiring virtue:

"Fasting has been prescribed for you in order that you may become more righteous." (2:184)

Keeping this point in mind we should look forward to Ramadhan with eager anticipation and diligently observe all the fasts unless legitimate reasons prevent us from doing so.

Most people in this world are primarily concerned in seeking financial prosperity. They forget that as silver is less valuable than gold, so gold is less valuable than virtue. God says in the Holy Quran:

"Surely he is very keen for the love of wealth." (100:9)

While it may be good to have plenty of money, it is also good to check up now and again and make sure that we have not lost those things which money cannot buy such as moral virtues. Concerning real prosperity God says in the Holy Quran:

"Verily he truly prospers who purifies himself." (87:15)

Let us remember that virtue is to the soul what health is to the body. People are very concerned about their physical health and are prepared to give careful attention to their diet. When they are unwell they will quickly call the doctor and seek the most effective remedy; but generally they are little concerned in feeding their souls with spiritual nourishment and similarly they do not seek effective remedies for their spiritual ailments.

Islam provides a complete code of guidance on all virtues. God helps those who help themselves and it is now up to us, with the help of God, to develop them within ourselves.

A moral virtue is the proper control and regulation of thought and conduct in conformity with the teachings of Islam. Love, for instance, becomes a moral virtue when demonstrated correctly and on the appropriate occasion, otherwise, if it is merely instinctive or channelled in the wrong direction then it is not a display of virtue. The love and care which animals show for their young is instinctive and therefore not an act of virtue. Again love is regarded as a virtue only when expressed within proper and lawful bounds. The mother who showers an excess of love upon her child and allows it to do and have whatever it wants is not exemplifying the moral virtue of love; nor does the man who runs away with someone else's wife on account of his affectionate feelings for her. Exercising correct conduct on appropriate occasions formulates a moral virtue.

STAGES OF MORAL ADVANCEMENT

The Promised Messiah has drawn our attention to three stages of moral advancement regarding our dealings towards other people. The first stage requires that we should at least treat others in the same way that they treat us. We should return good for good. The second stage requires us to return better treatment and greater good for that which we have received while the third stage calls upon us to render service and do good to others without any thought of receiving anything in return. We should never even hint to the person that he is under an obligation to us of any kind. This state of mind should be cultivated to the extent that it functions as second nature as does the love of a mother towards her child.

MORAL VIRTUES

Moral virtues embrace numerous personal qualities. Among them are: self-respect and respect for others, kindness, sympathy, honesty, forgiveness, simplicity, cleanliness, gentleness, courage, goodness, nobility, patience, steadfastness, perseverance, charity, generosity, politeness, hospitality, mercy, justice, self-control, contentment, cheerfulness, helpfulness, gratitude, chastity, tolerance, love, unselfishness, and many more which could be added to the list.

No exemplar of virtue excelled the Holy Prophet (peace be on him). The following verses taken from a poem written by the Promised Messiah extol the high morals of the Holy Prophet (peace be on him):

*What a noble man! What a comely man;
His breath smells like the breath of flowers.
God is visible in his face,
Such are his virtues, such is his case.
That is why he is loved. Indeed his virtues demand
That he should be loved to the exclusion of all.
Easy of access, noble, bounteous, friend of the God-Fearing.
And he excels all in excellence and nobility,
in glory and the beauty of the soul.
Muhammad is the best of creatures,
The soul of the nobles, the elect of the elect.
All noble virtues have found their limit in him.
The blessings of all times have found their place in him.
By God! Muhammad is next to God,
And through him alone can we reach God.
He is the pride of the pious, the holies.
He is the pride of the men of virtue.
He excels all those who were honoured before him.
Indeed excellence is a matter of virtue and not of time.*

I have already explained from the Holy Quran that the cultivation of Islamic virtues is the purpose of our creation and it would, therefore, be a folly on our part to neglect the object of our existence, for then we would be the losers in both the worlds. The development of moral virtues is the highest and most rewarding of all accomplishments. In no other pursuit can we find greater satisfaction and happiness—not even in the accumulation of a large fortune.

EARNEST OBJECTIVE

The first requisite needed in the achievement of any objective is that we should be charged with an earnest desire to attain it, otherwise we are not likely to get very far. Enthusiasm makes all the difference. It jet-propels us towards our objective whatever it may be. Let us, therefore, be in earnest.

The Holy Quran mentions certain people who declared:

"We earnestly wish that the Lord should include us among the righteous people."
(5:85)

These people earnestly wished to become righteous. They were not

indifferent about it; nor did they only mildly wish for it. They earnestly wished for it and as a result of their enthusiasm to become virtuous they were successful and became the recipients of God's favours and blessings, as the next verse reveals.

"So Allah rewarded them for what they said with gardens beneath which streams flow. Therein shall they abide; that is the reward of those who do good."
(5:86)

Let us enter this crusade to develop and improve moral virtues within ourselves earnestly and with enthusiasm, then our efforts are sure to bear fruit, blessed and rewarded by God.

PRAYERS

The next point is the subject of prayer. The Promised Messiah has said that that person is proud who places complete faith in one's own powers and does not recognise the omnipotence of God. He declared that his only weapon was prayer and that he relied on the help of God for everything. It is essential that we resort to prayer and seek God's assistance in our efforts to develop moral virtues. Since prayer is itself a virtue as stated in the Holy Quran:

"Remembrance of Allah is, indeed, the greatest virtue." (29:46)

God tells us in the Holy Quran another great benefit of prayer:

"Surely prayer restrains one from indecency and manifest evil."
(29:46)

In these permissive times we need every ounce of strength to resist the multifarious temptations which assail us from all directions. God tells us that the answer lies in prayer: so the next step for us is to give more attention to prayer. Not only should we be regular in our daily prayers but we should also pray for protection against the incitements of satan. The Holy Prophet (may peace be on him) has also spoken on the efficacy of prayer in times of temptation. He said:

"As to those who are virtuous, when a suggestion from satan assails them, they remember God: and behold! They begin to see things right."

THINKING

Now I come to another point which is the management of our thoughts because everything originates from thought. I would like to quote a short passage from the Bible:

quote a short passage from the Bible:

"As a man thinketh in his heart so he is." (Proverbs 23:7)

Scientific research has conclusively established the fact that man is what he thinks and he becomes what he thinks. He is the product of his thoughts.

Our character is no more than the embodiment of our thoughts. We build our character on the foundation of our thoughts. What we think we become. We possess the power to govern our own thoughts and thereby build a character of our own choice because our character is no more than a reflection of our thoughts. An immoral character grows from the seeds of immoral thoughts while a virtuous character grows from the seeds of virtuous thoughts. This law of mental science operates as assuredly as does the law of gravity or any of the other stable laws of this universe. We may use it to our own immense advantage in the development of moral virtues by discarding and omitting impure and negative thoughts from our mind and concentrating only on virtuous ones. One thing we do possess which no government can take from us is the freedom to choose and control our own thoughts.

Just as a gardner keeps his garden free from weeds and grows only the flowers and fruits of his own choice, so may we cultivate the garden of our mind by weeding out undesirable thoughts and planting only noble, pure and virtuous ones which will grow, bloom and colour our character with their fragrance and splendour.

We wish to close our minds to impure thoughts and to discard those which happen to sneak in. Islam teaches us to keep away from those things which breed evil and for this reason to keep away from dance halls, gambling shops, public houses, brothels and low forms of entertainment. Other things which should be shunned are the lewd type of paper-back novels which flood the bookshops; magazines crowded with photographs of nude women and most films which may be described as an abomination of satan. these things are all the work of the devil aimed to bombard the mind with impure thoughts. Furthermore we should avoid all uncharitable thoughts towards others such as hatred, jealousy, deceit, scorn, envy, revenge, etc., as they are also immoral in their way. Not only does the Holy Quran enjoin us to keep away from evil but also to keep the company

of the righteous from whom we may derive moral upliftment. We should remember that not only are we accountable to God for our actions but also for our thoughts. We read in the Holy Quran:

"Whether you disclose what is in your minds or keep it hidden, Allah will call you to account for it." (2:285)

Being human it is almost an impossible task to shut out evil or wrong thoughts completely from our minds. In that case we are enjoined to discard or suppress them; and doing that is in itself a virtuous achievement. the Holy Prophet (peace be on him) has said:

"If a man is assailed by an evil thought but he suppresses it or drives it out of his mind and does not act in accordance with it, God will bestow upon him a good reward."

PERSEVERANCE

There is no doubt that the path of virtue is not an easy one to tread as it is a slippery uphill journey. We are all liable to slip. Nevertheless, it is an uplifting and delightful journey which winds through sceneries of heavenly enchantment. Nothing worthwhile can be achieved without effort and this maxim applies to moral development as much as it does to any other endeavour. Without pains there can be no gains. Whereas prayer is essential, at the same time we have to put our best foot forward and strive in the way of Allah. Some people pray for more than they are prepared to work for and then wonder why their prayers are not answered.

The objective before us is to improve day by day in the development of moral virtues. No one should like to remain static. It has been said that if we go not forward then we go backward. This virtuous objective which we now have in mind calls for self-effort and perseverance. Let it be said of us when we die that we died climbing on the path of moral virtue. God tells us in the Holy Quran:

"Persevere in the right path." (10:89)

Again we read:

Allah is with the steadfast." (2:245)

As I have mentioned, moral virtues cannot be developed without effort. We need to exercise constant self-vigilance, self-analysis, self-discipline, and self-control. As we are human beings and not angels, we are subject to weaknesses and liable to stumble and make

mistakes from time to time as we have many temptations to battle with and overcome; but if our spirit is strong we need not despair of ultimate success. In fact our every effort to advance in moral development will lead us upward towards heaven and even if we fall short of the heights of our aspirations we shall have travelled a long way on the heaven bound path of virtue. God says in the Holy Quran that even when we falter and stumble we should not despair:

"O my servant who have committed excesses against their own souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah, surely Allah forgives all sins. Verily He is Most Forgiving, Merciful." (39:54)

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II is the author of the book *Ahmadiyyat or True Islam* in which he writes:

"Islam rescues man from despair and tells him that he can, in spite of his errors and mistakes, attain to the purity of mind and conduct which is the highest goal of man. It thus encourages him to make constant effort towards virtue and purity and enables him ultimately to arrive at his goal."

William Gladstone, a former British Prime Minister of the Victorian era, made the following significant statement:

"No man ever became great or good except through many and great mistakes."

Although the prophets of God are exempt from this observation because they are exceptionally good all their lives, it is a truth which is witnessed in the lives of all other great men; so if from time to time we slip on the path of virtue we should not be unduly grieved but pick ourselves up and carry on, determined more than ever not to make the same mistakes again.

Two thousand years ago a famous Roman author named Seneca wrote the following appraisal of a virtuous man:

"The greatest man is he who chooses right with the most invincible resolution; who resists the sorest temptations from within and without; who bears the heaviest burdens cheerfully; who is calmest in storms, and the most fearless under menaces and frowns; whose reliance on truth, on virtue, and on God is the most unfaltering."

SIMPLICITY

Simplicity is a characteristic of virtuous living and the Holy Prophet (may peace be on him) has warned us against leading a life of luxury:

"Beware of leading a life of luxury for verily the servants of God never live luxurious lives"

Simple living in the way of Allah polishes and brightens the soul because one becomes detached to a certain extent from the material embellishments of this world. One does not hanker for this thing or hanker for that thing, while those loving luxury are not content in mind unless they have the best of everything. The truth has been said that the richest are those who have fewest wants and the Holy Quran tells us that the best provision is righteousness and not the luxuries of this world. A virtuous person is content with little and is not interested in a life of luxury. Wealth, no doubt, is a blessing and does not necessarily prevent a person from living a simple life although it very often does.

Simple living has always been the way of the prophets of God. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) could have had every kind of luxury he demanded but he preferred to live a life of extreme austerity. His habits were simple. His food was simple. His clothes were simple. His home and its furnishings were also simple. He used to sleep on a rough mattress and recline on a coarse mat which would leave its impression upon his skin. Someone once asked why he rested on such a coarse mat while the rulers of other countries use soft mattresses and cushions. He replied that this was no matter for concern as they had chosen this world while he had chosen the next.

In 1934 Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II launched a scheme known as *Tahrik-i-Jadid*. He called upon members of the Ahmadiyya Movement to contribute an annual sum of money for the purpose of opening and maintaining missions in overseas countries. These contributions are in addition to the normal *Aam chanda* contributions which requires a minimum of one sixteenth of our income. He also called upon Ahmadi to live simple lives. Some of his instructions were:

- (1) Meals should consist only of one dish.
- (2) Stop going to cinemas and theatres.

- (3) Cut down on home decorations.
- (4) Cut down on clothing expenses.
- (5) Cut down on jewelry.
- (6) Not to buy things one really does not need.

Our present Khalifa has also called upon members of the Community to live frugal lives and cut down lavish expenditure on clothes and ornaments. He said in one of his addresses:

"I want to knock at the door of every Ahmadi and start a crusade against evil customs. I want to tell them that whosoever will not give up wasteful customs and not reform himself, then he should know that he is of no use to God, His Messenger and to our Community, and that consequently he would be thrown out of it as a fly is thrown out of milk."

The Promised Messiah has also emphasised the value of simple living. He has said:

"Do not be extravagant."

"O you who love the pomp and pleasures of this world bear well in mind this is not the place of permanent abode for man."

"Luxurious living and the enjoyment of the good things of material life hold no permanent guarantee."

"For the sake of the Lord, abandon the path of luxurious and easy living. It is, indeed, an accursed path. Have nothing to do with this curse. Otherwise forget all about your hopes of seeing the Lord."

Another advantage of simple living is that it brings one close to the poor and common people. Those who like to maintain a high standard of living often look down upon the poor and are not inclined to mingle with them. While they are happy and at ease to visit and stay with their well-to-do friends they would not care to visit, let alone stay with, their poorer brothers in faith.

The development of moral virtues is a practical philosophy and not one just to be listened to or even just to be remembered. It is one to be practised. Certainly it is a very comprehensive subject on which volumes could be written. I have covered briefly just a few aspects of this vast subject. My aim has been to awaken interest and increase the urge within us to pay greater attention to the development of moral virtues. My prayer is that the seeds which I have scattered may fall on good soil to grow and bear virtuous fruit—Amen.

2. PARADISE ON EARTH

An Ahmadi is very fortunate in as much as he has recognised and accepted the Promised Messiah. This is indeed a priceless blessing and the person who does not take full advantage of it denies himself true happiness because Ahmadiyyat or True Islam leads one to that blessed state—Paradise on Earth.

The purpose of this treatise is to emphasize that Islam is a religion which can bring permanent happiness to the heart and soul of a person in spite of being frequently afflicted with suffering of one kind or another, hardships, disappointments and other kinds of inconveniences. In other words it is through Islam that one can experience paradise and live on earth. This is no idle dream. It is the truth and if one wishes to dwell in paradise while living in this world then Islam guides the way and provides the opportunity for one to enjoy this heavenly experience. Is it not something that we should eagerly desire to attain? The Promised Messiah has written:

"Our paradise is our God. Our highest delights are in our God. We have seen Him and found in Him loveliness of every kind. This treasure is worth having even if it is at the cost of one's life. This jewel is worth purchasing even if the price is one's whole self."

Everyone wants to be happy; but everyone's idea of happiness is not the same. Often a person thinks that he would find happiness through the fulfillment of some particular desire or cherished goal. It might be getting married, the appointment to a certain position, making plenty of money, the birth of a child or a thousand other wishes.

Islam teaches that the source of true and lasting happiness is knowledge and love of God. While the lawful pleasures of the world are in no way despised or condemned, they can in no way fill the heart with that heavenly bliss which results from deep attachment to God and from the cultivation of pure and noble habits. In our search for heaven on earth, the Promised Messiah has said:

"Real and true happiness lies in the recognition of God."

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II has also said:

"Paradise lies in spiritual progress and not in the satisfaction of physical desires."

There is no doubt about it that the fruits of paradise can be tasted on this side of the grave. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

"But for him who fears and stands before his Lord, there are two gardens."
(55:47)

In his interpretation of this verse, the Promised Messiah has explained that it refers to two paradises—one in this world and the other in the world to come. In this world God purifies, comforts, and strengthens the hearts of his devoted servants; and this condition may be described as heaven on earth. Referring to these people in the Holy Quran, Allah says:

"We are your friends in this life and in the Hereafter." (41:32)

"For them are glad tidings in the present life and in the Hereafter."
(10:65)

The Holy Prophet (peace be on him) is reported to have said that the rewards and blessings of paradise are beyond the imagination of the mind to understand and appreciate. He said:

"The blessings of paradise are things which the eye has not seen, the ear has not heard nor has the mind of man conceived."

This is confirmed by the Holy Quran in the following verse:

"And no soul knows what joy of the eye is kept hidden for them as a reward for their good work."
(32:18)

The reason is that man has not been given senses with which he can recognise and fully understand the conditions of the next life. Man's senses can only pick up and interpret the vibrations of this world. Nevertheless he is possessed with the capacity of experiencing a glimmer of heavenly life in this world; and that glimmer is to him something very wonderful. Man cannot imagine the tremendous intensity of the heat of the sun yet he can enjoy its warm rays which in no way compares with the temperature of the sun itself. Similarly the state of paradise experienced in this world is incomparable with the state of paradise in the Hereafter.

The objection may be raised that as the Quran and the Holy Prophet (peace be on him) have stated that man cannot conceive the

nature of the blessings of paradise, then there exists a contradiction in saying that he can also experience the fruits of paradise in this world. The point has been explained that the rewards of paradise in the Hereafter are far and high above those enjoyed in this life. Furthermore the Holy Quran states that while they are not the same, there is some resemblance between the two. We read in the Holy Quran:

"And give glad tidings to those who believe and do good works, that for them are gardens beneath which flow streams. Whenever they are given a portion of the fruit therefrom, they will say: 'This is what was given to us before' and gifts mutually resembling shall be brought to them. And they will have therein mates perfectly pure, and therein will they abide."
(2:26)

This verse implies that the spiritual fruits of the next life resemble the spiritual fruits of this life although they are not the same. It should also be kept in mind that the descriptions of paradise in the Holy Quran are metaphorical and should not be interpreted literally. Gardens, streams, fruits, honey, milk, and other objects mentioned in the description of paradise are things which everyone is fully aware of in this world. In order to give an indication of the enjoyments of paradise, the Quran has likened them to some of the good and enjoyable things of this life. They also have symbolic meanings. Milk represents spiritual knowledge; streams, good deeds; fruits, spiritual rewards, and so on. The next world is not composed of matter, therefore nothing about it is material or identical to the things of this world.

There is no sweeter or more rewarding aspiration than the cultivation of heavenly characteristics within oneself as this is the means of experiencing paradise on earth. Islam is not a dry and lifeless code of rules and teachings but rather it is a life-giving message providing guidance which can uplift one into a world of divine happiness and contentment which may truly be described as a state of paradise on earth. No doubt this prize cannot be attained in one step. It demands perseverance in self transformation. Furthermore one must be in earnest and restless to make progressive advancement along the path of virtue; and this is what Islam is all about, for in the Holy Quran Muslims have been called upon by Allah to endeavour to excel one another in virtue and steadfastness. The highway to paradise on

earth, and in the Hereafter is wide open for everyone to travel along.

There is something far more valuable and satisfying in life than the possession of wealth and the enjoyments of worldly comforts. Although these things are not condemned by Islam, it does make it crystal clear that spiritual prosperity is infinitely more important than worldly prosperity. The pleasure derived from a deep connection with Allah and the living of a noble and virtuous life far exceeds the pleasure gained only from material enjoyments. Spiritual power enables one to sail through the storms of life with patience and fortitude and grants one contentment of heart under all circumstances. It calls for the adjustment of one's thoughts in conformity with divine laws and good general conduct. Allah says regarding the virtuous:

"Verily the most honourable person in the sight of Allah is he who is most righteous."

(49:14)

"The best provision is righteousness."

(2:198)

Real prosperity lies through religion and living the right kind of life as is clear from the Holy Quran in which Allah says:

"So fear Allah, O men of understanding, that you may prosper."

(5:101)

"O you who believe, be patient and enjoin patience and be firm and fear God that you may prosper."

(3:201)

Life on this earth is a preparation ground for the life to come. Through righteous conduct and behaviour one can find paradise here on earth even before one reaches the grave. Prosperous indeed is the person who finds it. There is no comparison between heavenly contentment and the pleasure gained from things of the world. Regarding the things of this world Allah says in the Holy Quran:

"And the life of this world is only a pleasure and a sport but surely the abode of the Hereafter is better for those who are pious. Will you not then understand?"

(6:33)

"O my people, this life of the world is but a temporary provision, and the Hereafter is certainly the home for the permanent abode."

(40:40)

Anything worth achieving requires effort; and this principle also holds true in the development of spiritual qualities which is the

ultimate goal of Islam in this life. Physical health is a great blessing but spiritual health is a far greater one. Man becomes very concerned for himself over the smallest physical ailment and will anxiously seek relief even for a headache or common cold. It is unfortunate that usually he has little or no concern for his spiritual ailments. Everyone is a walking advertisement of himself and in order to show himself at his best he must imbue himself with heavenly qualities. These he may acquire through prayer, right thinking and right actions for as 'a man thinketh so he becomes.' Contemplation on holy and noble virtues crystallize into holy and noble conduct. This is the golden gateway to spiritual prosperity which brightens the soul with the sunshine of paradise. Such a person takes paradise with him wherever he goes.

Spiritual development does not depend only upon the avoidance of wrong and improper tendencies but also on the observance of good and proper conduct. The doing of good is an important ingredient of spiritual prosperity. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

"Do good that you may prosper." (22:78)

A gardener does not only remove weeds but he also plants and cultivates a variety of flowers in order to create a lovely garden. Likewise, the making of a garden of paradise within oneself requires both the removal of spiritual weeds and the planting on the mind of good and virtuous thoughts which, on cultivation, will blossom forth into flowers of paradise in the form of heavenly characteristics.

The Holy Prophet (peace be on him) has said that prayer is the key to paradise; and Allah says in the Holy Quran that He answers the prayers of those who call upon Him. One should constantly pray for help in one's efforts to win the pleasure of Allah to the extent that He be pleased to make us worthy and fit to reflect the light of heaven and enjoy the serenity of paradise in one's life-time. There is a depth of meaning in the oft-repeated daily prayer:

"Guide us on the right path. The path on which those have walked who have received Thy blessings and favours."

(1:5-7)

The right path leads to paradise and the task of the spiritual wayfarer is to advance further and further along this highway and so deeper and deeper into paradise. This is real prosperity and the earnest seeker expresses his yearning for it in the following prayer:

*"O Allah, diffuse light into my heart and ears;
Diffuse light on my eyes and on my tongue;
Diffuse light on my right and on my left;
Diffuse light above me and under me;
Engulf me in Thy light."*

The question may well arise how can one find paradise and contentment in this world when one is perpetually burdened with afflictions and problems of one kind or another? First it should be known that they are really blessings in disguise and that Allah clearly states in the Holy Quran that He causes them in order to test and build one's faith. They offer opportunities for one to demonstrate the depth of one's faith and calibre of one's character. Furthermore if one meets them with patience and fortitude one gains the reward of Allah both here and in the hereafter. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

"And We will try you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives, and fruits; but give glad tidings to the patient who, when a misfortune overtakes them, say: 'Surely to Allah we belong and to Him shall we return.' It is these on whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy and it is these who are rightly guided." (2:156-158)

"And We will surely try you until We distinguish those among you who strive for the cause of Allah and those who are steadfast. And we will make known the facts about you." (47:32)

Allah has made it absolutely clear in the Holy Quran that life's journey is not intended to be one of ease. He says:

"And We created man to face hardships." (90:5)

One should never moan or despair over trials and tribulations as this is an indication of weakness and ingratitude to Allah. The Holy Prophet (may peace be on him) has said:

"For a Muslim, life is full of good, and nobody but a true believer finds himself in that position, for if he meets with success he is grateful to God and becomes the recipient of greater favours from Him. On the other hand, if he suffers pain and tribulation, he endures it with patience and thus again makes himself deserving of God's favours."

Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud Din Mahmood Ahmad—the second successor of the Promised Messiah—has truly stated:

"Burdens are not always burdens."

A well known American writer has said that in every adversity there lies the seed of an equivalent or greater benefit. That is to say, one can find and gain some advantage from every adversity. This truth has also been confirmed in the Holy Quran. The American writer was not a Muslim but the following words he has written may well be appreciated by all. He wrote:

"I am thankful for the adversities which have crossed my pathway, for they have taught me tolerance, sympathy, self-control, perseverance and some other virtues I might never have known."

Charles Darwin—the famous natural scientist of the last century who wrote the 'Origin of the Species' in which he endeavoured to prove that man evolved from the monkey family, was a man who suffered from ill health but made use of it to his advantage. He said:

"If I had not been so great an invalid I would not have done so much work as I have accomplished."

The Holy Quran teaches that one should be patient in times of adversity when things seem to go wrong and against one's personal interests. One should not despair or become unduly frustrated. Only then can one enjoy the sweetness of paradise in the midst of the storms of life. Misfortunes are inevitable. One must learn to bear and cope with them patiently and successfully. This is one of the important battles of life in which one must emerge victorious. One should not weaken under adversity but resolve to remain poised and strong in behaviour during the darkest night, just as one would during the sunniest day.

Normally one worries an unnecessary amount over adversities, set backs, failures, disappointments, etc. By doing so one cannot enjoy peace of mind which is one of the blessings of paradise. Worry is generally caused not so much by the problem itself but by the wrong attitude one adopts towards it. Take two people with identical problems. One frets and fumes and becomes highly distracted. The other remains cool and calm. The problem was one and the same but the opposite reactions of the two persons were caused by their different attitudes. Islam teaches that one should approach every adversity or problem with a patient attitude and if one does this then

the state of one's mind remains stable and poised with the result that the heart remains strong, and at rest in spite of disturbing influences. One should, therefore, endeavour to be patient and seek the good in everything. Allah has decreed that no one will escape hardships and misfortunes. One should expect them and when they come, to make the best of them without complaints or grievances and with a positive attitude. Then one can begin to find paradise in this world, no matter what may be the circumstances one has to meet in life.

The Holy Quran teaches that paradise in the Hereafter is an abode of joy and tranquility. No dark clouds will cast their shadows upon the soul but on the contrary it will continually be bathed in the sunshine of heaven. Serenity and love will prevail in place of anxiety and rancour. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

"Verily the righteous will be placed amidst gardens and fountains. 'Enter therein with peace and safety.' And We shall remove whatever of rancour may be in their breasts so that they will become as brothers seated on thrones facing one another."
(15:46-48)

One who wishes to walk in paradise on this earth should strive to disperse from the mind every dark or improper thought because thought is the architect of character. Man is no more and no less than what he thinks. Through the power of the will and the help of Allah one should not allow any satanic thoughts or moods to enter the mind. No doubt this is not an easy task for Satan is a powerful enemy. Nevertheless one should be ever watchful and on guard. Otherwise they will do untold damage and seriously hinder the development of a heavenly demeanor. The following is a list of dark moods which one should avoid:

Worry	Revenge	Rebellion
Irritability	Pride	Vulgarity
Excitement	Jealousy	Dishonesty
Depression	Resentment	Ridicule
Despair	Mockery	Lust
Despondency	Envy	Maliciousness
Irreverence	Deceit	Intolerance
Obstinacy	Falsehood	Slander
Selfishness	Cruelty	Backbiting
Scorn	Suspicion	Impatience

Everyone of these dark moods is a spiritual poison. They darken one's character and soul. They lead one away from paradise—not towards paradise. In the following verse of the Holy Quran, Allah emphasizes the importance of self-purification:

"Verily he truly prospers who purifies himself." (87:15)

The essence of the message of Islam is contained in this verse. One who fails to grasp the significance of its meaning fails also to appreciate the objective of Islam and its true meaning. The Holy Quran is not merely a theoretical book but provides a code of divine guidance which can transform and uplift one into a realm of heaven on earth, providing one is in earnest and strives to make oneself fit to attain that experience. I would like to recite a small poem which is relevant to this point:

*"And I will write to him who fights
And vanquishes his sins,
Who struggles on through weary years
Against himself and wins."*

Again it has been said:

"He who conquers himself is greater than he who conquers a city."

It may appear to some that it is no more than a wild dream to become master of the dark moods. The goal is too high like trying to reach for the moon. That is not so and it is a negative attitude to adopt. No doubt the goal is high but Muslims are taught to aim high. Allah is Ever Willing to assist those who strive to improve their spiritual status because this is what Allah wants man to do. In world affairs men strive to attain their cherished ambitions and are often successful. How even more so should man strive to attain those spiritual goals which Allah has set before him; and one of these is self-purification. He should have faith and remain steadfast in his endeavours and then will he witness the fruits of his efforts. Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmood Ahmad has said:

"Islam rescues man from despair and tells him that he can, in spite of his errors and mistakes, attain to the purity of mind and conduct which is the highest goal of man. It thus encourages him to make constant effort towards virtue and purity and enables him ultimately to arrive at his goal."

Many of the dark moods which I have mentioned originate in one's attitude towards others on account of grievances of one kind or another. The Promised Messiah said with regard to his relationship towards others:

"I have reduced the feeling of resentment and anger in my mental attitude."

The Promised Messiah would never discuss the faults of other people. He never became embittered by their words and behaviour although it is true his wrath would be aroused on reading or hearing abuse directed at the Holy Prophet (peace be on him). Worry, jealousy, discontent, depression, hate, resentment, ill feeling, etc., consume spiritual vitality at an alarming rate, thereby weakening one's spiritual power and attraction. One can help oneself along the road to paradise in this world by absorbing and implementing the following exhortations of the Promised Messiah regarding one's attitude and behaviour towards other people. The Promised Messiah has said:

Fling aside your resentment and malice which springs from worldly and selfish desires.

Pride is the worst impurity of all.

Forget all mutual resentment and unpleasantness.

You should have no ill feeling for anyone whosoever.

I say that you should forgive and overlook the faults of others.

Forsake all kinds of low and mean hostilities and jealousies.

Develop more and more your power of forbearance.

A true Muslim never harbours malice for anyone.

Take utmost care lest your emotional reaction should overwhelm you.

Take every hardship and injury with a proper degree of forbearance.

Spit out all the turmoil of low emotions, anger and resentment.

Do not speak in terms of ridicule. There should be nothing low or vulgar in your speech.

Never return evil for evil.

Having listed the dark moods which block the way to paradise, I shall now list the bright moods which open the way to paradise:

Kindness	Love	Optimism
Sympathy	Nobility	Self-control
Tact	Patience	Earnestness
Honesty	Steadfastness	Contentment
Simplicity	Charity	Cheerfulness
Cleanliness	Justice	Helpfulness
Sincerity	Dignity	Courage
Refinement	Politeness	Perseverance
Forgiveness	Hospitality	Gratitude
Gentleness	Mercy	Unselfishness

One should endeavour to ingrain these qualities into one's personality as permanent habits of conduct. One is the governor of one's thoughts, and I have already stated that one becomes what one thinks. The task of the spiritual wayfarer who seeks to radiate the sunshine of heaven is to feed his mind with only pure, uplifting, noble and grand thoughts. As long as one allows impure, depressing and pessimistic thoughts to revolve around in the mind, one's progress in spiritual growth is very much hampered. Self-transformation depends to a great extent on right thinking and it is self-transformation which is the real aim of life. The Promised Messiah has said:

"You should transform yourselves and turn entirely into a new people. Everyone should realise this secret and transform himself so thoroughly that he may claim he is now a different person."

The path of virtue winds through the garden of paradise and it is no wonder that the Holy Quran exhorts us to excel one another in virtue. No one should rest content with one's present spiritual condition. One's motto should be constant self-improvement. Anything else is not the spirit of a true believer; nor is it even the attitude of the inmates of paradise in the Hereafter, although after death the capacity of doing right or wrong ceases. Nevertheless, those holy souls continually pray to Allah to draw them nearer and nearer to Him. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

"Their light will run before them and on their right hands. They will say, 'Our Lord, perfect our light for us and forgive us; surely Thou has power over all things.'" (66:9)

The verse reveals that even after death the souls dwelling in

paradise yearn for more enlightenment and nearness to Allah. How then can one in this world rest content with one's spiritual condition? There is always room for progress and the more one advances the more room does one see for further improvement. Also when one realises that rewards in paradise vary in degree, the incentive is increased to improve oneself all the time and as much as possible in order to earn higher rewards. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

"For all are grades of rank according to what they did." (46:20)

The Promised Messiah has also said:

"Those who accept God here and lose themselves in divine love and who take their stand on the right path, have in store special honours which would not be attained by other people."

One's conversation and tone of voice reveal to a great extent one's feelings and moods. One should keep out of one's conversation all dreary and disagreeable remarks and speak only in a bright manner. Just as a man is as he thinks, so also is he as he speaks. Manner of speech affects one's personality. If one talks the way one would like to be, then one will become the way one talks. So if one wants to become a spiritual son of Allah, fit to walk in paradise, then one must talk in the language and tone of voice of such a person. Speech is the mirror of the soul. When one feels inclined to pass an ill or gloomy remark, one should refrain from doing so by either saying something else or remaining silent. A characteristic of the Promised Messiah was that he never made disparaging remarks about individuals however much at fault they might be.

Gratitude is another of the bright moods which cheers the heart of the receiver as well as the giver. An Ahmadi has an immense amount to be thankful for to Allah. One may suffer the lack or loss of various worldly comforts and achievements but their value is insignificant in comparison with the greatest and most valuable gift of all—Ahmadiyyat or the true Islam. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

"Exalt Allah for His having guided you and that you may be grateful." (2:186)

It would be the height of ingratitude to grumble, complain and grieve over matters and affairs which do not run in accordance with one's liking and expectations. One is not able to pass a heavenly life

on earth if one allows disappointments and grievances to rule one's emotions. One cannot escape them; but one can control them.

Blessings and opportunities abound in the life of everyone and if they are not apparent, they are there to be discovered. There is a short poem which goes:

*If I sit down and start to count the worries I have got,
I'll never smile again because of ills I've such a lot;
But goodness me, I've blessings too—I count them by the score,
I have indeed no end of things to thank the good Lord for.*

There is the incident of the man who complained he had no shoes until he met a man who had no feet; and of another man who fell from a ladder and broke his leg and said, 'I am thankful that it was not my neck.'

Gratitude is a companion of happiness.

As I said at the beginning, the purpose of this treatise has been to show how one can enjoy the fruits of paradise in this very life. Nevertheless I have written sufficient, I hope, to wet the appetites of those who are anxious to experience the blessings of paradise in this world.

3. REFLECTIONS ON THE SOUL

'And thou, O soul at peace! Return to thy Lord well pleased with Him and He well pleased with thee. So enter thou among My chosen servants. And enter thou My Garden.' (89: 28-31)

The most precious part of our being is the soul for it is the seed from which develops our new spiritual body in the Hereafter. As the infant grows and matures physically and mentally in accordance with the nature and distinctive peculiarities locked in the cell lodged in the womb of the mother, so, in a more or less similar manner, our soul serves as the seed which grows into our new spiritual body after death; and the condition of this spiritual body will much depend on the condition of our soul when it finally quits its earthly home.

It is crystal clear that the paramount aim and object in the life of every Muslim should be the proper nourishment of his soul which is achieved only through obedience and dedication to the laws and principles of Islam. He should be constantly reviewing his habits of living, ever eager to overcome all manner of un-Islamic conduct; and to take positive steps in advancing along all paths of virtue. This is the grand goal of life—the secret of success and happiness in both worlds.

The existence of the soul is as great a certainty as is the existence of the human body in which it dwells; and the existence of the world to come is as much a fact as is the existence of this material universe. The greatest evidence is the Holy Quran—the Word of God.

In the Holy Quran Almighty God has given repeated warnings concerning the folly of forsaking spiritual obligations in order to gain and satisfy material interests. Islam means resignation to the Will of God. This is the message which was reiterated time and time again by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, on account of the irreligious and wayward pursuits into which Muslims had drifted. Foolish is the Muslim who defies the laws of God and shows more interest in worldly affairs than in the betterment of his soul. The day must come when he will regret it.

"Until when death comes to one of them, he says entreating, 'My Lord send me back, that I may do righteous deeds in the life that I have

left behind'."

(23: 100, 101)

"And Allah will not grant respite to a soul when its appointed time has come; and Allah is well aware of what you do."

The soul is our real self. We are souls with bodies attached; not bodies with souls attached. Although both are inter-related, each influencing the other, the time comes when the soul shakes off the body as a snake sheds its skin. Our body is attached to the soul merely for a brief span of time so it is abundantly clear that the care of the soul should be the prime concern in life and that it is spiritual suicide to neglect spiritual aspirations for the love of material pleasures such as the accumulation of wealth, easy and licentious living, laziness, selfishness, etc. The embellishments of this world are evanescent while the fruits of self effort in the path of God are eternal. Material wealth and pleasures gained and enjoyed with God's disapproval are poisons which pollute the soul.

Every Muslim should heed the voice of God and fully realise the danger of becoming entangled wrongfully in the affairs of this life. Almighty God says regarding this world:

"And the life of this world is only a play and a sport, but surely the abode of the Hereafter is better for those who are pious. Will ye not then understand?"

(6:33)

"O My people, this life of the world is but a temporary provision; and the Hereafter is certainly the home for permanent abode."

(40:40)

"Whereas the Hereafter is better and more lasting."

(87:18)

A fitting commentary on the foregoing verses has been epitomised by Hazrat Ali who said:

"All the occupations of a wise man are for his self-reform, all his cares for the benefit of the next world, and all his endeavours for the good of the life to come."

How may we aid ourselves in taking advantage of this wonderful advice? The following observation given by Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan deserves our keenest attention.

"The consciousness of living every moment of one's life in the sight of God is the most effective deterrent against wrong-doing and the most potent incentive towards righteous action."

(Islam—Its Meaning for Modern Man)

The soul is the crown jewel of man which he should preserve and keep polished with the lustre of righteousness while it is within his power to do so before death overtakes him. The capacity of doing right or wrong ceases after death though spiritual progress does continue but solely through the Grace of God:

"Those who have the light of faith in this world shall have their light on the Day of Judgement running before them and on their right hands and they shall be continually saying: 'O Lord perfect unto us our light and take us under Thy protection; for Thou hast power over all things.'" (66:9)

All souls in paradise will not necessarily enjoy the same status, for God tells us in the Holy Quran that man is rewarded according to what he did:

"And for all there are grades of rank according to what they did." (46:20)

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) is reported to have said:

"There are a hundred grades in paradise prepared by Allah for those who fight in the path of Allah and, in between each, is as great a distance as is between earth and heaven." (Bukhari)

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah and Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, also said:

"Those who accept God here, who lose themselves in divine love and who take their stand on the right path, have in store special honours which would not be attained by other people." (The Will)

No sincere and earnest Muslim ever rests content in the thought that he is good enough to secure a place in paradise. He not only perseveres in righteous conduct but at the same time desires to become worthy of earning a lofty place in paradise. He struggles, therefore, till his last breath in brightening his soul through increased devotion to God. This is the spirit of Islam.

There is no return of the soul to the body after death. No dead person has been or ever will be resuscitated. This is the law of God:

"Allah takes away the souls of human beings at the time of their death; and during their sleep the souls of those who are not yet dead.

And then He retains those against which He has decreed death, and sends back the others till an appointed term. In that are sure signs for a people who reflect." (39:43)

The soul takes permanent leave of the body at the time of death and temporary leave during sleep only to return instantaneously at the moment of waking. The body cannot live without a soul and the soul cannot live without a body. After death the soul is enveloped in a spiritual aura which may be likened to a divine halo of light or a satanic cloud of darkness; and its degree of brightness or gloom would depend upon the spiritual magnetism of the soul from which it emanates. This aura which surrounds the soul is the womb from which it emerges on the Day of Resurrection as a new spiritual creation. Through a process of transformation the soul has developed into a spiritual body which in turn possesses a new soul. The new body possesses increased powers of spiritual perception over that of the human body; and similarly the new soul is more subtle than the human soul.

It has been stated that the body cannot live without a soul. The question then arises how does the body continue to live when the soul leaves it during sleep? The answer lies in the fact that although the soul dwells in a region outside the body during sleep both are connected by a spiritual cord. Neither is severed from the other. A space ship escapes from the earth and its magnetic influence as it speeds on into the depth of space; nevertheless, they are linked by a line of radio communication which through remote control can bring the pilotless space craft back to earth. There also exists a spiritual link between the soul and the body when they are separated during sleep. The soul is outside but still attached to it. Both are still united to one another. Through this link the soul returns to the body. It is the severance of this link which releases the soul from the body permanently; and this is the ultimate cause of death. The body dies as soon as the link is broken while the soul lives on, never to return.

Normally the mind does not remember the experiences of the soul when it is outside the body. The soul can leave the body in wakefulness as well as during sleep. Sometimes an experience is remembered. Fred Rebell, while sailing across the world alone, had the experience of leaving his physical body and rose so high that he could see a ship over the horizon. He observed that his soul body was

attached to his physical body by a luminous ribbon.

(*Escape to the Sea*, Youth Book Club, 1951)

Captain Burton, when very ill, found himself floating above his physical body which eventually his soul body re-entered very quickly.

(*Man is a Spirit*, Cassel & Co. Ltd.).

Robert Crookhall records the following experience related to him by the persons concerned.

"Mrs. Ivy Prothero stated: 'I found myself out of my body, suspended horizontally above the bed. I was attached by a cord, much the same as a barrage balloon in the war. I looked down on the figure on the bed. I thought, 'I must get out and get some air.' Then I slipped back into my body. It was extremely pleasant. The experience convinced me that I have a soul as well as a body.'" (Intimations of Immortality)

An American, Mrs. D. E. Boorman, described how her soul body rose horizontally over the physical. From it she saw the latter on the bed. The two were united by a silver light. When her soul body re-entered the physical, it felt like slipping into a coat. The experience convinced her of survival. (Intimations of Immortality)

It is not an uncommon thing for people to have out-of-the-body experiences when under an anaesthetic. Dr. Enid Smith who had been given chloroform said 'I was out of my body and above it, perfectly natural and safe.' (Psychic News, July 3rd, 1954).

Another experience is that of Dr. George Wyld:

"Dr. George Wyld says (upon taking chloroform): 'I suddenly experienced the extraordinary impression that my spiritual being stood visibly outside my body lying on the bed.'"

(Cosmic Consciousness, R.M. Bucke, M.D.).

These are but a few accounts experienced by many people in various ages and in different parts of the world. Their confirmation of the link cord is of particular interest. Scriptural and circumstantial evidence overwhelmingly establish the existence of the soul. It is for us to realize its presence within us and to nourish it with beautiful thoughts, words and deeds so it may shine with the brightness of the full moon here and in the Hereafter.

4. TRANQUIL SPIRIT

Peace of mind is an inner condition for which many yearn but few attain. Most people who are subjected to provocation manifest unrest and frustration to a lesser or greater extent. True peace of mind ingrains itself upon the character of an individual and is constantly reflected in his voice, carriage and movements of the body. It is a blissful and heavenly blessing which dwells within and colours the personality twenty four hours of the day.

The tranquil spirit is an attribute which can be developed and acquired by anyone who earnestly desires to possess it. The essential ingredients for success are prayer, mental attention, self-discipline, resolve and perseverance. They will propel the individual upwards in his flight towards his blessed goal; and soon he will experience a remarkable change within himself; but still he will not rest satisfied with these first fruits of progress. He will desire and strive for further advancement and will be on guard against the slightest deviations liable to unbalance his spiritual poise; and as he continues to progress, peace and serenity will take firmer control of his thoughts and actions until conscious attention is no longer required, it being replaced by second nature.

The person possessing peace of mind is not indifferent to sorrows and distress of life. He is acutely aware of them but he accepts them in a calm and philosophical manner and often an observer may fail to detect any sign of physical emotion.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, was very devoted to his first born daughter—Ismat. She fell ill and he watched over her with great care and love; but when she died he seemed to forget her completely. He had resigned himself to the decree of Allah. On another occasion a false and malicious charge of murder was brought against him by some Christian missionaries. Their malevolence knew no bounds. Normally most men finding themselves under such circumstances would show clear symptoms of strain, fatigue and worry, yet all the while the Promised Messiah remained so cheerful, friendly and composed that no one could imagine that such a heavy charge hung over his head.

The person who possesses peace of mind never frets and fumes. Loss of life, loss of wealth, loss of health, persecution, hardships, annoyances, disturbances and difficulties do not unduly upset him. Although he is fully conscious of their impact, his demeanour remains calm and under personal control.

God tells us in the Holy Quran that He will cause man to undergo various afflictions in order that he may develop patience and steadfastness:

“And We will try you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives, and fruits. But give glad tidings to the patient, who when in misfortune overtakes them, say ‘Surely to Allah we belong and to Him shall we return’.”
(2: 156-157)

It is in times of affliction and inconvenience that a person is tested and given the opportunity of exercising and demonstrating the crown of virtues—patience. The conquest of undesirable emotions is not an easy task. Blessed are they who succeed. There are people who are deemed by others to rank among the spiritual elite yet when provoked are quick to display impatience and anger, much to the bewilderment of their admirers.

The purpose of this article is to focus attention on the immense charm and value of the tranquil mind and to arouse the enthusiasm and aspiration of the reader to develop such a state of mind within himself; then to present some practical guide lines to help him on this enthralling journey to unclimbed heights of mental and spiritual development.

In order to avoid harm and succumbing to temptation, it is a great asset to be able to recognise early danger signals and then take the required precautions and safeguards. The gathering of dark clouds in the sky signals the approach of a storm. The traveller will look for shelter, the housewife will gather in her washing from the line and the shepherd will round up his flock. They all recognise the signs of an impending storm and prepare for the coming deluge.

It is extremely important that the person who is striving to develop the tranquil spirit be alert to every condition and occasion which is liable to cause him to act in a manner contrary and destructive to that spirit. He should be thoroughly acquainted with those daily events of

life which may cause him to stumble; and taking heed of their warning signals, prepare himself from falling. If this procedure is given earnest attention and adopted with enthusiasm, it will prove of immense value in meeting the multifarious circumstances of life in a calm and serene manner which is the essence of the tranquil spirit.

Absence of self-control opens the flood gates for the onrush of impatience, irritability, unrest, abuse, resentment, sarcasm, bitterness and a host of other negative traits, all of which are the destroyers of tranquility. They must be conquered.

A list of some everyday occurrences which are liable to cause a person to express irritation now follows. Each one is a warning signal. They should be impressed upon the mind so that they may be recognised immediately as they appear, whereupon immediate mental defensive action should be taken. Each one should be welcomed as a challenge and as an opportunity for developing self-control. Gradually all kinds of disturbing influences will be mastered and composure will reign supreme.

NOISE

Noise is only too often the cause of frayed nerves, bad temper and harsh words. Even in the home and family circle, screeching children and howling babies arouse temper among members of the household. It was amidst such scenes of tumult that the Promised Messiah wrote some of his masterpieces of religious literature without as much as uttering a word of complaint about the noise going on around him.

The Promised Messiah was once suffering from severe headache and he was asked by one of his disciples—Maulvi Abdul Karim—whether he was not disturbed by the noise of the children and servants in the house. He replied that he himself did not like asking them to keep quiet but Maulvi Abdul Karim may do so in a polite manner. On another occasion he was asked how he was able to work so coolly and calmly amidst the household noise whereupon he replied that he did not give heed to it and therefore he was not disturbed.

INTERRUPTION

Annoyance is generally felt and expressed by the person who is interrupted while absorbed in some important and interesting work. Even the chirping bird, the hovering fly or the buzzing mosquito will

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NOISE

Noise is only too often the cause of frayed nerves, bad temper and harsh words. Even in the home and family circle, screeching children and howling babies arouse temper among members of the household. It was amidst such scenes of tumult that the Promised Messiah wrote some of his masterpieces of religious literature without as much as uttering a word of complaint about the noise going on around him.

The Promised Messiah was once suffering from severe headache and he was asked by one of his disciples—Maulvi Abdul Karim—whether he was not disturbed by the noise of the children and servants in the house. He replied that he himself did not like asking them to keep quiet but Maulvi Abdul Karim may do so in a polite manner. On another occasion he was asked how he was able to work so coolly and calmly amidst the household noise whereupon he replied that he did not give heed to it and therefore he was not disturbed.

INTERRUPTION

Annoyance is generally felt and expressed by the person who is interrupted while absorbed in some important and interesting work. Even the chirping bird, the hovering fly or the buzzing mosquito will

disturb some people to such an extent that they fly into a fit of anger; and they will exhibit a similar reaction if awakened from sleep.

It has been related that the Promised Messiah used to be frequently interrupted by young children when deeply engrossed in writing his literary gems. Time and time again they would knock on the door of his room demanding that he open the door to let them in. The Promised Messiah would quietly rise from his seat and, without a word or expression of annoyance, open the door. On one occasion while he was engaged in writing a book, his young son Mahmood (Khalifatul Masih II) set fire to the completed manuscript papers which the Promised Messiah had placed to one side. On turning to them for reference he found them burnt to ashes. A smile spread across his face as he mused that perhaps God desired that he should write something better in its place.

THE TIRESOME TALKER

Some people are wearying conversationalists. They will talk on and on without a break and often their conversation is dull and self-centred and unconstructive. Giving time and attention to such people is often difficult and calls for patience and tact on behalf of the listener who may otherwise fidget or explode with impatience thereby giving offence.

The Promised Messiah was sometimes confronted by tiresome talkers but he would never show any sign of annoyance or impatience. He would listen to all they had to say with the attention of one listening to the sweet song of a nightingale.

FOOD

Food is often the cause of irritability. Hungry children show it one and all. Many husbands chide their wives if their meal is not prepared on time or not in the manner according to their liking. Hunger irritates the nerves which almost inevitably gives rise to vexation, especially in those unaccustomed to fasting.

All should be on guard when the hunger signal buzzes.

FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

Money problems often cause great mental strain which in turn is inclined to engender irritability and general loss of vitality and sense

of well-being. Tranquility of mind is our goal so it is essential not to allow financial problems to undermine our spiritual equilibrium.

We should place our faith and trust in Allah and be thankful that through Ahmadiyyat we possess immortal wealth which is more valuable than all the gold in the world.

There were but a few dates in the home of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) at the time of his death and the Promised Messiah possessed only one rupee shortly before his demise.

The tranquil spirit will enable a person to maintain a cheerful and bright countenance despite his financial difficulties.

TIREDNESS

A tired person is not usually in the best of humour and his nerves are inclined to become on edge and he may easily give way to petty annoyances. Tiredness is a signal for the spiritual wayfarer to be on the alert and to give special attention to his words and actions.

ABUSE, SLANDER, SARCASM

These are verbal weapons used by malevolent persons who want to derogate, traduce and deride other people.

The person anxious to cultivate the tranquil spirit must learn to remain calm and poised in the presence of his detractors. It demands a high degree of self-control but he who is determined to master himself will ultimately succeed in the attainment of his aspiration.

Whenever any of the preceding circumstances confront a person he should immediately guard himself against being adversely influenced and thereby lose to some extent his spiritual poise. These are the times when he must remain calm and relaxed; and each time he succeeds he will add a brick to his spiritual fortress until eventually his general demeanour will become extraordinarily magnetic.

There are hundreds of little things in life over which people are liable to become upset. Disapproval of something is quite in order; but its uncontrolled expression is out of order. What upsets A may not upset B; and what upsets B may not upset A. A list of some common daily occurrences likely to test the patience of a person now

follows. They should not be glanced over lightheartedly. Those who treat them lightly will be the first to fall when the challenge comes; but those who are in earnest will appreciate their significance and learn to maintain patience when they come face to face with them and other similar events:

When people have no respect for punctuality.

When you lose something of value.

When called upon to do something you do not agree with or do not want to do.

When people pick a quarrel with you.

When you just miss a train or bus.

When somebody fails to keep his promise.

When you knock over a tin of paint, bottle of milk or ink.

When you are feeling unwell or suffering from pain.

When you feel you are being treated unjustly.

When people fail to give you the respect you feel you deserve.

When people do not act in accordance with your wishes.

A host of other illustrations could be listed. As muscular exercises develop the muscles of the body, so do mental and spiritual exercises develop the mind and soul. The achievement of an objective whether it be material or spiritual calls for constant attention backed by a strong desire to succeed:

'Desire plus continued thoughts on the thing desired equals the result desired.'

There is no depth to the ocean of the tranquil spirit. It is a gem of priceless value which may be discovered and possessed by the earnest person who focuses his mind upon its realisation, constantly watches over his conduct with careful attention and prays to Allah to help him succeed in this his blessed aspiration.

5. SELF CONTROL

'He is most powerful who has power over himself.'—(Seneca)

Reaching for the moon with outstretched arms will never bring that luminous satellite within man's grasp. Great laws of nature have to be understood and mastered before a spacecraft can be built, launched and ejected into the depths of outer space on its speedy and silent journey to the moon bearing with it its load of scientific instruments and crew of astronauts for bringing that orb within the dominion of man.

God is not prepared to fulfill the desires and dreams of man by miraculously transporting him in the twinkling of an eye from the fertile landscape of the earth to the barren surface of the moon. He has, however, gifted man with intelligence and enabled him through diligent study, observation and experiment to discover and comprehend certain scientific laws, enabling him, thereby, to achieve his goal—the conquest of the moon.

There are also spiritual laws which if recognised and observed can transport man from this mundane world to the blissful realm of heaven; but man must take the initiative if he wishes to succeed in this spiritual conquest, bearing in mind that God helps those who help themselves. Just as the successful flight of the spacecraft is dependent upon the control centre which directs its multifarious operations, so does the spiritual flight of man depend upon that inner quality—self-control.

Self-control is the underlying factor which marks the character of man's conduct. It is the directing influence in character building and should, therefore, receive intent cultivation and maintenance. The power lies within man to elevate his character to almost limitless heights. He possesses the master-key but his progress or retrogression depends largely upon himself. True, all power rests with God but He helps those who help themselves:

'But I will write of him who fights
And vanquishes his sins,
Who struggles on through weary years
Against himself and WINS.'
(Caroline Le Row)

The object of existence is self-purification.

"Verily he truly prospers who purifies himself." (87:15)

A true believer yearns to find divine protection in the lap of God where he is no longer influenced by the power of satan. The upward climb to this holy sanctuary requires self exertion and the assisting hand of God which He is ever ready to offer to those who strive to reach Him.

The Islamic way of life is a disciplined one calling for obedience, endeavour and constant watchfulness; and the backbone of discipline is self-control. The spiritual life of a Muslim should be a progressive one; and the greater the measure of self-control he cultivates, the greater will be his progress; for this quality is indeed the balance wheel of life by which the whole character and conduct of a man is affected for the better or the worse.

Study the lives of Prophets, saints and holy men of God and it will be seen to what great extent self-control was the directing power contributing to their spiritual poise and charm.

Self-control governed every act, word and movement of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace be on him). He never swerved from his path of duty and exercised the utmost patience under the severest hardships and provocations. He was the embodiment of charm, patience, forbearance, truthfulness, honesty, courage, justice and all the other noble virtues of Islam. He was indeed—as Hazrat Ayesha declared — an embodiment of the Holy Quran.

The life and character of the Promised Messiah—Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement—was also spiritually poised and a delightful exhibition of perfect self control. Nothing ruffled his composure though no other man in his time was ever more abused and misrepresented; and the responsibilities on his shoulders were immense. He placed complete reliance on God and had absolute confidence in the ultimate success of his mission. He was not disturbed by temporary setbacks; nor was he ever inflamed by the enmity and derision of his opponents. He said:

'The feeling of mercy is influx in my heart and I have reduced the feeling of resentment and anger in my mental attitude.'

(Reported by Maulvi Abdul Karim)

Within ourselves we are but our own commanders. God has provided us with the guidance, given us the tools with which to forge our characters, and the promise of His help. It is for us to take command of ourselves, resist the forces of satan, purify ourselves through righteous behaviour and constantly seek the help of God through prayer. This is the great task we have to tackle while on this earth; and to keep on course we must stand at the wheel of self-control as the captain stands at the wheel of his ship guiding it through tempestuous storms to its port of destination.

Self-control moulds the character of a happy life.

'He alone is happy who is free from hatred and malice and has his passions under control.' (Bhagwad Gita)

Self-control increases self-respect:

'Respect yourself or no one else will.' (Proverb)

Self-control also attracts respect:

'He who maintains self-respect is never degraded in the sight of others.' (Hazrat Ali)

'Nothing gives one person so much advantage over another as to remain always cool and unruffled under all circumstances.'

(Thomas Jefferson)

Self-control develops the virtue of all virtues — patience:

'O you who believe be patient and enjoin patience and be firm and fear God that you may prosper.' (3:199)

Self-control fosters obedience without which no believer can make progress on the Right Path:

'O you who believe, obey God and obey the Apostle and those in authority among you.' (4:59)

Developing the art of self-control ranks among the highest and most rewarding of educations; but it should be remembered that the best instruction can only be of help to the extent to which it is put into practice. Self-control is not a gift but an accomplishment; and the secret of accomplishment is concentration which transmutes strong desires and mental visions into physical realities. We are the architects of our own souls and God is our Guide and Helper.

6. RANCOUR

'Leave not in our hearts any rancour against those who believe.' (59:11)

The value of pure gold is negligible compared with the value of a pure heart. As the latter is harder to acquire than the former, consequently more persons possess gold than purity of heart.

There are many persons who are far advanced in spiritual development and worthy of emulation; but even they are not immune from satan's influence other than an exceptional few. It is true that they are men and women of high dedication and they have travelled far along the Right Path; but still they fall far short of perfection.

Rancour is a negative state of mind in which one holds inimical feelings of one kind or another towards another person or persons. Blessed is that person whose heart is free from all taint of rancour. It is a spiritual poison which enervates soul magnetism. Every spiritual wayfarer realises the adverse effect it has on both spiritual and physical health. The Promised Messiah has said:

'We should always overlook the faults of our friends, no matter how serious they may be.'

'Avoid malice and deal with human beings in sympathy with love.'

The Promised Messiah possessed a heart devoid of the slightest trace of rancour. It prevents serenity and all thirsty souls seek its antidote. It stems from certain hellish moods and emotions which include the following:

Resentment.	Revenge.	Contempt.
Pride.	Dislike.	Jealousy.
Selfishness	Anger.	Suspicion.

One must strive to overcome these obstacles of spiritual progress because they are all sources of rancour. Life is a constant battle against oneself. A famous preacher once said:

'I have had more trouble with myself than with any other man.'
— (B e e c h e r)

The struggle calls for constant prayers and vigilance. Progress may be slow; but slow and steady wins the race. The victory is priceless.

*'But I will write of him who fights
And vanquishes his sins.
Who struggles on through weary years
Against himself and wins.'* (Caroline Bigelow le Row)

Life is a battle for the purification of the soul; and as rancour soils it with spiritual rust, it behoves all believers to grind to dust this serpent of satan. Let us take a look at those nine moods and emotions in which germinate the seeds of rancour.

RESENTMENT

Resentful thoughts towards others generate rancour in the heart. There are many causes which give rise to thoughts of this nature. One may feel one has suffered a personal injury from an ill remark or a callous act; or one may feel displeased with the conduct or attitude of somebody. The result is that one's thoughts towards that person are always of an unfriendly nature. Thoughts of this kind create an obstruction in the development of purity and holiness of mind.

REVENGE

This evil propensity is resentment at its worst. It has been said:

'Revenge is the abject pleasure of an abject mind.' (Juvenal)

Revenge fires the mind with rancour. This devilish cancer must never be allowed to pervade the mind. It must be uprooted the instant it appears. How may one be successful in defeating this foe? A few valuable guide posts may help:

'The noblest revenge is to forgive.'

(Handbook of Preaching by H. H. Boen)

'Forgiveness and a smile is the best revenge.' (Samuel Palmer)

'When thou hast power of revenge, abstain from the power of taking it.' (Hazrat Ali)

While being crucified, Jesus prayed for his tormentors:

'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.' (Luke 23:34)

During the early years of Islam, the Muslims in Mecca had been cruelly persecuted by the idolatrous Meccans who had inflicted all kinds of inhuman treatment upon them. The Holy Prophet and his small band of devoted followers were compelled to migrate to Medina for sanctuary. Converts to Islam increased. The Holy Prophet

yearned for the time when he might be able to return to Mecca; but he had to wait ten years before this was possible. When he did return he was accompanied by ten thousand followers who could have taken Mecca by storm; but the Holy Prophet gave strict orders that there should be no bloodshed despite the earlier enormities committed on the Muslims by the Meccans. The Holy Prophet entered Mecca full of forgiveness for the persecutors and he dealt severely with only a handful of persons who had been guilty of excessive crimes. All others he pardoned although they had committed grievous injury upon him and his small group of converts when they had resided in Mecca; and even after they had migrated to Medina, those same Meccans pursued them and battled against them on several occasions. Such was the magnanimity of the Holy Prophet. He never sought revenge. His heart was full of mercy, sympathy and love for mankind.

CONTEMPT

Contempt and scorn is another manifestation of rancour. This mental attitude is incompatible with the spirit of holiness. One may strongly dislike the behavior or characteristics of somebody but one's thoughts towards him should always be of a charitable nature. Contempt hardens the heart.

Almost everyone suffers ill-health in one way or another during his or her lifetime. Millions wantonly injure their health through careless habits of living. Smokers, drinkers and gormandisers are but a few examples. Those who pass through life unscathed are infinitesimal. Similarly, everyone except the prophets of God suffer to a lesser or greater extent from spiritual maladies. One does not treat the physically sick with contemptuous indifference; nor should the spiritually sick be treated in a similar manner. One's attitude towards them should be one of sympathy—not antipathy.

PRIDE

Rancour sprouts from pride. One who is proud, even in the least degree, is inclined to think improperly towards others. All derogatory thoughts mixed with prejudice are rancorous. Pride is detested by God.

"Walk not on the earth proudly." (17:39)

"Evil indeed is the abode of the proud." (16:30)

It has also been said concerning this sin:

"The proud will be gathered together on the Day of Resurrection like seeds in the form of men. Disgrace shall surround them from every place."
(Holy Prophet)

"Your vices of which you are ashamed are better than your virtues of which you are proud."
(Hazrat Ali)

"I say truly that on the Day of Judgement arrogance shall be regarded as the greatest calamity next only to ascribing partners to God. It is an affliction that humiliates a man in both the worlds."

(Promised Messiah)

Pride is such a subtle power that even good and noble people are often unaware that they are showing it. Constant self-surveillance is essential. When judging others—and even oneself—it should be kept in mind, however, that there is a clear distinction between personal dignity and pride. The former is wholesome self-respect.

DISLIKE

One may dislike certain attitudes, mannerisms, characteristics and habits of a person; but one should not harbour animosity. This rule in moral philosophy has been summarised:

"Hate no one; hate their vices. Not themselves." (Brainard)

A believer seeks to win the pleasure and love of God. He desires to reflect the light of heaven. He yearns for peace of mind in a troubled world. Where there is animosity there is rancour; and this feeling burns within the heart like a destructive fire. It is incompatible with the spirit of holiness. Rancorous thoughts towards others pollute the heart with satanic poison. Blessed is he who is a master of his thoughts.

JEALOUSY

Jealousy is fuel for rancour. Its deadly venom devitalizes the soul of spiritual magnetism and hinders the cultivation of the same heavenly power. It is an emotion which assails everyone from time to time to a lesser or greater extent. It is an emotion which is extremely hard to prevent entering into the heart; and also to extinguish once it has taken flame. The Bible says:

"Jealousy is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame." (Song of Solomon; 8:6)

Love and jealousy often go hand in hand, for where there is love there is also jealousy. But love and jealousy enter the heart uninvited.

There is no explanatory reason why two persons are sometimes drawn together by deep bonds of love. Neither invited the love. It just found its way into their hearts. More or less in a similar way jealousy finds its way into peoples' hearts. It is not invited. The spiritual man abhors its presence and does all in his power to combat it with the aid of prayers and mental discipline; and as much as he is successful so is he more easily able to resist and combat it in the future until such times that he becomes a master of himself and is no longer violable to its obtrusion.

"May Allah be our Protector from the evil of the envier when he envies." (133:16)

SELFISHNESS

Disinterest and negligence in the welfare of others is selfishness. It breeds unfriendliness which in turn generates feelings of rancour. Islam teaches the value and importance of charity especially towards one's neighbours. Indifference is selfishness. Neglect of responsibility towards others is selfishness. Grievances, grudges and ill-will often stem from selfishness. It has been said:

"Selfishness is the root and source of all natural and moral evils."
(Emmons)

"Selfishness is the great unknown sin." (Southern Churchman)

Naturally one is not obliged morally to concede to all the wishes of everyone; but one should avail oneself of opportunities in rendering service to others on appropriate occasions even at one's own inconvenience. Hazrat Ali has said:

"To do good to others and help them mercifully is a sign of nobleness and magnanimity."

ANGER

A moral quality is an emotion exercised under correct control. Anger is not improper on certain occasions. The Promised Messiah said that he would become angered on learning that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had been abused or insulted. Our concern is the retention of anger on improper occasions.

Anger arouses ill feeling which is the same as rancorous thinking; and this is what we are trying to avoid because it is a hellish state of mind:

"A man in a passion rides a mad horse." (Benjamin Franklin)

'Do not destroy the beauty of your soul by anger and revenge.'
(Zoroastrian Teachings)

'Try to suppress anger for the harm it does is irreparable.' (Hazrat Ali)

Every spiritual traveller is well advised to make earnest and constant effort in suppression of unwarranted anger. An angry person is liable to say or do things which he will regret later. Bitter and harsh words leave an indelible impression on the minds of others. They snap the bonds of human relationships. An outburst of anger has estranged friends, husbands and wives, parents and children. An irritable person irritates himself as well as everyone else. He is suffering from rancorous fever. The Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, has stressed the virtue of calmness and patience thus:

'Two draughts are more acceptable to God than all other ones. One of anger swallowed with calmness and the other calamity borne with patience.'

SUSPICION

Suspicion leads to a great deal of misunderstanding because more often than not it is wrong or inaccurate. It causes one person to misjudge another, often resulting in ill-feeling of one kind or another. Ill-feeling is rancour. It is no friend of virtue and an enemy to good relations and happiness.

'O ye who believe, avoid frequent suspicions; for suspicion in some cases is a sin.'
(49:13)

'Suspicion is the poison of true friendship.' (Augustine)

One should handle all rumours with the utmost caution and be extremely careful in the matter of voicing one's own suspicions about other persons.

NO RANCOUR IN PARADISE

A heart free from rancour is a blessing from heaven. It is a condition of bliss for in this world. Even the righteous are constantly grappling with this enemy—some more successfully than others; but in paradise they will be completely immune from its influence:

'Verily the righteous will be placed amidst gardens and fountains. Enter therein with peace and safety. And We shall remove whatever of rancour may be in their breasts so that they will become as brothers seated on thrones facing one another.' (15:45-48)

7. FASTING TOWARDS RIGHTEOUSNESS

"O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become righteous." (2:183)

Almighty God has exhorted Muslims to excel one another in righteousness for this is the ideal quality of character; and they have been urged to strive continually towards the perfection of this attribute because in the sight of God this virtue is the most distinguished mark of honour. God says in the Holy Quran:

'Verily the most honourable among you in the sight of Allah is the one who is most righteous among you.' (49:14)

The acquisition of righteousness is the highest and noblest of all ambitions and should be the foremost aspiration of every Muslim. This divine attribute is a heavenly and magnetic energy which is so powerful and attractive that hearts are moved and swayed by its radiation. Said Hazrat Ali:

'He who sets righteousness as his ideal has the hardest persons softened and the remotest strangers attracted.'

The Islamic form of fasting is strictly a spiritual exercise and is one of others which also serve as aids towards the development of righteousness. Muslims have been repeatedly reminded in the Holy Quran that they should cultivate the spirit of righteousness in their hearts:

'O ye men worship your Lord Who created you and those who were before you that you may become righteous.' (2:22)

'The best provision is righteousness.' (2:198)

The cultivation of this heavenly attribute has also been emphasised by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah and Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement who writes in one of his poems:

'Wonderful is the jewel the name of which is righteousness. Blessed is he who practises righteousness. So, O ye Muslims! perfect your righteousness.'

Successful fasting leads to righteousness providing one imbues oneself with the spirit of fasting which calls for the promotion of a strong desire and resolve to attain spiritual elevation during the period

of abstention. Desire is the motivating force which drives one onwards towards one's cherished goal, whatever it may be; and when coupled with the spirit of resolve there is no power which can prevent one from achieving one's aim other than divine intervention.

A climber cannot expect to reach the summit of a mountain in one stride; nor can a servant of God expect to attain spiritual purification in one stretch of fasting. He cannot make the distance in one jump. He must move from stage to stage; goal to goal; each must be within comfortable reach of the other.

In every prescribed or supplementary fast one should set one's eyes on a goal higher than the one already reached; and the goal should be that one shall emerge from the fast a far more righteous person than at the time one entered into it. If one adopts this practical approach then the blessings of fasting and the feeling of exaltation must be experienced.

How does fasting enable one to grow more righteous? First it should be known that there is fasting and fasting. The mere abstention from food and water will not serve any spiritual value unless the spirit of fasting is present in the heart. There are many Muslims who fast merely from habit or custom. On being questioned why they fast their reply is that it is a commandment of Allah; yet they ignore other important commandments of Islam and are found to drink, gamble, lie, lend money on interest, neglect prayers, etc. Had they possessed some measure of the spirit of Islam they would realise the importance of giving attention to all the commandments of God and not only to fasting. Their fasting will not effect any change in their daily way of life; nor will they have increased in righteousness which is the primary purpose of fasting.

Ramadhan is a holy month of fasting. It is a holy month in as much as God Himself has promised to pour down blessings upon those who fast in earnest; striving all the time to win the pleasure of God; and seeking divine assistance through prayer and good conduct. It is a time of wonderful opportunities for making spiritual progress.

Not only does one have to refrain from eating and drinking during the hours of fasting but one also has to refrain from anger, back-biting and all forms of immodest speech. One must vigilantly guard one's tongue from the promptings of satan. Although one must observe this

vigilance at all times, whether or not one is fasting, extra special attention should be maintained while fasting for it is a time when one's sincere efforts are richly rewarded.

Sin of any kind results from the failure to resist evil temptations. Fasting strengthens one's power of self-control and self-restraint; and thereby one becomes more fortified against the onslaughts of the devil.

Almighty God has promised that He will bless and reward those who are grateful to Him for the favour He has bestowed upon them:

'...And Allah will certainly reward the grateful.' (3:145).

As fasting is a time when one is seeking and hankering after a good measure of divine blessings, a golden opportunity is presented to increase and express one's gratitude to God for all His bounties and favours. Self denial enables one to appreciate more fully the good things of life; and this realisation makes one more thankful to God for one's daily provision. Gratitude encourages charity which is another Islamic virtue that should be exercised more freely and generously when fasting. Abstinence from food and drink creates a deeper feeling of understanding and sympathy for one's less fortunate brethren who are suffering on account of poverty, famine and other kinds of distress.

While every virtue is meritorious, perhaps the greatest of them all is patience. It is the key to self-mastery and the secret of success in every field of physical and spiritual life. Throughout the Holy Quran Muslims have been exhorted to cultivate this cardinal virtue, for without this firm basis the edifice of righteousness cannot be properly constructed. Patience is an avenue through which the blessings of God flow:

'And seek help with patience and prayer.' (2:46).

Patience is a pre-requisite for spiritual prosperity:

'O you who believe, be patient and enjoin patience and be firm and fear God that you may prosper.' (3:199)

Patience surmounts all obstacles and is the antidote for every affliction:

'And We will try you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives, and fruits; but give glad tidings to the patient.' (2:151)

Impatience is a thorn in the flesh. It disturbs one's equilibrium and

irritates the nervous system. Patience is not an easy virtue to master and is rarely reflected to a high degree even among those who are counted as spiritual personalities, for often they rage and quarrel like little children, even among themselves. Fasting helps to subdue the passions and develop patience. Too many people ruin their lives through anger and frustration. The patient man, having learned how to control himself, possesses peace of mind and is revered for his spiritual strength which lifts him into the realms of righteousness where he dwells contented with his Lord.

While fasting, special attention should be given to prayer which is the direct line of communication between man and his Creator. God Almighty says:

'...Pray unto Me. I will answer your prayer.' (40:61)

Keeping in mind that God Himself has declared that the purpose of fasting is to become righteous, and He answers the prayer of the supplicant, one should fervently pray that one may attain to a higher degree of righteousness: Certainly God will answer this prayer and one will become joyous in the knowledge and experience of spiritual elevation which is the successful fulfilment of the purpose of fasting. One will realise the efficacy of fasting and witness within oneself a holy change for the better and personally understand how fasting helps one become more righteous.

Steadfastness is an essential quality of faith without which one can not progress very far along the path of righteousness. Fasting trains one to be steadfast in purpose when, despite hunger, thirst and fatigue, one must continue to the end. Self-discipline strengthens the power of steadfastness which is the force that breaks down barriers, overcomes obstacles and enables one to hold on to the rope of Allah in the midst of the storms of life. Regarding this vital ingredient of faith God says in the Holy Quran:

'And We will surely try you until We distinguish those among you who strive for the cause of Allah and those who are steadfast. And We will make known the facts about you.' (47:32)

'Verily those who say 'Our Lord is Allah', and then remain steadfast — no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve.' (45:14)

'But none is granted save those who are steadfast—no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve.' (45:14)

'But none is granted save those who are steadfast; and none is granted save those who possess a large share of good.' (41:36)

'...And exhort one another to be steadfast.' (103:4)

'...Verily the steadfast will have their reward without measure.' (39:11)

'Allah is with the steadfast.' (2:245)

Fasting reminds one of the importance of this indispensable part of faith —steadfastness. Whatever physical inconvenience one feels when fasting, one must complete the fast to the finish, unless one is suddenly stricken by illness. Steadfastness nourishes righteousness.

Fasting entails hardships and discomfort to a lesser or greater extent depending on the climate, length of the day and other factors. On account of their constitution some people feel the effects of fasting more than others. The ability to bear hardships cheerfully is a mark of spiritual maturity. One must always be prepared to face hardships for they are inevitable. God says in the Holy Quran:

'We have created man to face hardships.' (90:5)

Successful fasting causes one to become detached to some extent from material influences depending very much upon the attention and devotion one assigns to it. The body feels light and the soul bright. One does not feel fettered to this planet but seems to float over it in the realm of the angels.

When fasting, one is reminded that the body should not rule the mind but rather the mind should rule the body; for as a man thinketh so he is. Righteousness may be speedily acquired by constantly feeding the mind with pure and holy thoughts through meditation, reading and conversation on spiritual matters.

Bad habits are enemies of spiritual progress. One should never become their slave. One must break them once and for all if one wants to soar into the higher realms of holiness; otherwise they will hold one earthbound like a balloon at the end of a chain. Fasting helps to break bad habits such as smoking, tobacco chewing, reading trashy literature, visiting the cinema, watching television stories, sloth and laziness, flippant conversation, extravagance, over-eating and so many other worthless and harmful pursuits.

8. SIX ENEMIES OF SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

*'A sacred burden in this life ye bear,
Look on it, lift it, bear it solemnly,
Stand up and walk beneath it steadfastly.
Fail not for sorrow, falter not for sin,
But onward upward, till the goal ye win.'* (Kemble)

The goal of life is an exalted one which is not beyond the reach of any normal human being. The goal of a Muslim should be to attain to a high degree of holiness and righteousness.

'Verily the most honourable among you in the sight of Allah is the one who is most righteous among you.' (49:40)

The Holy Quran teems with verses exhorting Muslims to cultivate within themselves the spirit of righteousness.

'The best and most elegant dress is the raiment of righteousness.' (7:27)

'Those who do good and act righteously shall have a great reward.' (4:173)

The aspiration of every Muslim should be, therefore, to clothe himself in the mantle of righteousness, for this is the message of the Holy Quran. This spiritual trophy sparkles like a coruscating diamond glittering on the summit of a snow capped peak. Few are those who ascend the heights to claim it because the path is slippery and the ascent steep. The acquisition of righteousness calls for complete submission to the Will of God so that every thought, word and act should be for the glory of God.

A blessed man who is illumined with the light of righteousness is unlike other men. The light on his face seems to shine from the windows of another world and his demeanor is coloured with spiritual grace and charm. The atmosphere around him is sweeter and more refreshing than the scented breeze blowing softly across the meadows on a summer evening.

God desires to manifest His attributes through all and to bestow His grace and favours on all; but the servant of God must strive and

prove himself worthy and fit if he wishes to be a recipient of these heavenly gifts. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) has said that if a man crawls towards God then God comes walking towards him; and if he walks towards God then God comes running towards him.

God helps those who help themselves.

The citadel of faith is being attacked constantly by satanic missiles; and for this reason six extremely destructive ones will be reviewed here. We have to strive to overcome them although the battle will be hard. In this spiritual Jihad we may be encouraged by the Promise of God:

'Allah is the Protector of those who believe.' (47:12)

Who are those believers? They are those who strive in the path of Allah and obey those who are in authority over them; and also they are those who humble themselves before Allah and purge their hearts of selfishness and pride. In their hearts there is a yearning to become cleansed of all impurities; and should they hastily or even inadvertently do anything displeasing to Allah, the ache of remorse gnaws at their souls.

Every age has produced great men who have reached the summits of success through sheer perseverance and dogged resolution. Some of these famous figures had little or no schooling and passed their early years in abject poverty; yet they rose to become leaders of nations, industry and invention. Many of them died multi-millionaires. They harnessed their inner powers and climbed to the top of their respective professions; but their vision was limited to the confines of this world. What wonderful spiritual achievements lie in store for those who prefer to direct their attention towards heaven and marshall all their energies towards the development and purification of their souls. What great spiritual leaders they could become! What tremendous spiritual opportunities Islam offers man! How foolish is he who does not take advantage of them but gives preference to the comforts and enjoyments of this life. God says:

'Verily he truly prospers who purifies himself, and remembers the name of his Lord and offers prayers. But you prefer the life of this world, whereas the Hereafter is better and more lasting.' (87:15-18)

A Muslim should see to it that he grows from strength to strength;

not from strength to weakness which, unhappily, has happened only too often. Young Muslims and converts attach themselves to the faith with zeal and enthusiasm; but as the years slip by they also slip away. The aim of a Muslim should be to remain steadfast and progressive in faith throughout his life; never content to remain static but restless to reach new horizons. There are times, no doubt, when he feels that he is making no progress; but this may not really be true. However, these are times when he must be vigilant and tighten his grip on the rope of Allah. Dale Carnegie, who has written a number of books on personal development, notes that realisation of progress seems to come in periodical jerks and not gradually degree by degree. One seems to mark time for a while and then suddenly becomes conscious of having attained a higher stage of progress and understanding. This is very true in spiritual development.

The spiritual wayfarer is harassed constantly by satanic germs and the following six negative influences cause the commonest and most destructive forms of spiritual cancer.

- | | | |
|------------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| (1) Irritability | (2) Laziness | (3) Pride |
| (4) Jealousy | (5) Fear | (6) Loved ones before God |

IRRITABILITY

'A man in a passion rides a mad horse.' (Benjamin Franklin)

One of the greatest scourges of mankind is a fever of the brain known as irritability. Only those who have been cleansed by the Holy Spirit are immune from this disease; and such persons are few and far between.

An ideal home is a haven of peace while a broken home is hell on earth. The man who is always irritable with his wife and children is a sick man who can not live at peace with others; but let him make a pledge to curb his irate tongue at home and in proportion to his progress will his relationship with humanity improve.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmed, the Promised Messiah and Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, has said that many are smooth in appearance but inwardly they are like ravening wolves. There are those who are regarded as men of spiritual eminence; and, indeed, they appear to be so when surrounded by their

admirers; but when they are provoked their countenances quickly flush with anger and unexpected harsh and bitter words fall from their lips causing bewilderment and frustration to those who held them in high esteem.

Whereas anger is justified on certain occasions, it should be held under control and not allowed to run wild. As the rider guides and controls the swift horse on which he sits so should one be master of one's anger directing it and halting it as necessary. A practical aid in holding back anger is:

'When angry, count to ten before you speak.' (Thomas Jefferson)

Anger, peevishness, resentment and all other negative moods throw off vital energy at a terrific rate, reducing one to a state of physical and mental weakness; even to nervous prostration. Every thought or action that is not calm wastes energy and throws one out of poise which is not conducive to spiritual development. Excitement is weakness; calmness is strength; and yet greater strength is energetic repose wherein the system is charged with energy and emotion but at the same time held under perfect control. It is the combination of these two forces which is so essential for the development of spiritual poise. Poise generates and projects magnetism. Irritability saps the body of its energy which could better be used and directed along some useful channel. The test of true greatness is to remain composed when it is difficult to refrain from flying into a disagreeable mood.

Irritability is a creeping cancer of the mind, heart and soul which, if not checked, will leave its victim spiritually prostrate.

The nagging wife and the quarrelsome husband make a pair of demons. It is said that women are more emotional than men but sometimes it appears to be vice-a-versa. The poor wife sobs silently while her blustering and intemperate husband excoriates her with his double edged tongue.

The Promised Messiah once said:

'It seems highly disgraceful that we being men should quarrel with women.' (Character Sketch of the Promised Messiah)

The Promised Messiah was a paragon of gentleness and forbearance. His domestic life reflected the peace of heaven. Tranquility and concord coloured the atmosphere of his home and never did

a harsh or bitter word fall from his lips despite the tumult and mischievous pranks of children. Never was he known to scold them even when engaged in deep literary composition. Once he was asked by his companion Maulvi Abdul Karim how he was able to remain undisturbed and think so coolly amidst such noise. He replied:

'I do not heed what is going on about me and therefore I am not disturbed.' (A Character Sketch of the Promised Messiah)

The same companion has also recorded the following observation about the Promised Messiah:

'During my long stay in close proximity of the Promised Messiah I never heard him remonstrating with any person in the house or calling upon anyone to render an account.'

(A Character Sketch of the Promised Messiah)

The whole life of the Promised Messiah was illumined with the light of heaven; and the same light—though with less lustre—may brighten the countenances and demeanour of all who strive to resemble his likeness; but it will always be dim as long as irritability overshadows the personality. It behoves every spiritual wayfarer to overcome this enemy of serenity. The fight may be hard but the prize is priceless. Debauchers and degenerates have become reformed and cleansed of former evil habits. Drunkards have become dedicated servants of God. Life long smokers have discarded the tobacco habit. Savages have become saints. No one should make vain excuses for his irritability. It can be overcome if one cares to exert oneself and turn to God for help. Where there is a will there is always a way. All things—within reason—are possible. Positive thinking is a transforming power; and it becomes a tremendous power with the aid of prayer.

It is to the advantage of every spiritual wayfarer to make an all out effort to suppress and overcome irritability because this trait is incompatible with the spirit of holiness. In order to treat a disease a good doctor will seek its cause and deal with the root of the trouble. The spiritual wayfarer is also recommended to do the same. There are various causes for irritability and one of them is incorrect dieting. There are those who over-eat and suffer nervous strain when a little hungry. Most people consume material which is poisonous or harmful to the body. They crave for stimulants to anaesthetize their trembling nerves and suffer mental and physical irritation when they

are not available. Tea and coffee drinking has become a national habit in many countries although neither in themselves contain any food value. Housewives sip innumerable cups of tea throughout the day then wonder why their nerves are on edge. Tobacco is another poison which casts its deadly effects upon the nerves and organs of the body; and neither does the soul escape its lethal fumes. The smoker and the chewer of tobacco live with frayed nerves making them susceptible to headaches and outbursts of irritability especially when the poisonous weed is not available to alleviate their self-imposed agony. Self mastery is the golden key to spiritual progress; and the old adage is still true that he who can conquer himself is greater than he who can conquer a city.

When irritable, people are inclined to say and do things on the spur of the moment which they later regret; but harsh words and wrong actions often cannot be retrieved. Bitter words carve indelible impressions on the minds of others. A careless outburst of invective has estranged the best of friends, husbands and wives, parents and children. The thread which binds together human relationships is extremely brittle. It wears, tears and snaps with ease. There is the authentic case of a man and woman who celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary. One week later they sued for divorce.

The irritable person lives in the fire of hell. He who desires to walk with the saints must master his passions; and irritability is one of them

LAZINESS

'O God! I seek Thy protection against want of means and laziness.'
(Holy Prophet)

Laziness withholds progress in any endeavour; and in spiritual development there is no exception.

Sleep and rest are essential for health and efficiency. Eight hours of sleep daily has been recommended as ideal although many prefer to do with less. Many of the world's great geniuses spent half their nights absorbed in work. Napoleon once said that twenty two hours out of twenty four ought to be usefully employed. He lived his life to the full in which he accomplished herculean exploits through sleepless labour as the following incident reveals:

'An officer, entering his (Napoleon's) room a couple of

hours after midnight to communicate the tidings, found, much to his astonishment, Napoleon dressed and seated at his table, with maps, books and charts spread out before him.

"What!" enquired his friend, "Are you not in bed yet?"

"In bed?" Napoleon replied. "I have had my sleep, and am already risen."

"What, so early!" the other rejoined.

"Yes," continued Napoleon, "so early. Two or three hours sleep are enough for any man."

(Life of Napoleon Bonaparte by Abbott)

He was a personification of the following poem:

*"The heights by great men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight;
But they, while their companions slept
Were toiling upward in the night."*

Similarly in the spiritual field the Prophets and holy men of God have spent and do spend the greater part of their nights in prayer and labour. The Promised Messiah once said:

'Who told our brethren that life is long? There is no season for death; it may overtake you at any time. So we must value whatever time we have. We will not have these times again. There will remain only stories of them.' (Character Sketch of the Promised Messiah)

The Promised Messiah is reported to have said that he regretted so much time is wasted in the toilet and it would have been well even if that time could be spent in the service of Islam.

He condemned laziness in no uncertain terms:

'Everyone among you who relaxes and becomes lazy shall be thrown out of the Community as a dirty thing is discarded and thrown out. He shall die with regret in his heart and he shall not be able to injure God in any way.'
(Noah's Ark)

Laziness is one of the reasons why Muslims are negligent in the regular observance of the five daily prayers and as a result their spiritual growth is stunted; but even the offering of prayers is of little value unless preformed with attention and the spirit of earnestness. The Promised Messiah has advised:

"Offer your five daily prayers with such concentration and awe of mind as though you were seeing God in front of you with your physical eyes."

A true believer would no more think of missing his prayers than a hungry man would think of missing his meals. Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmood Ahmad—the second successor of the Promised Messiah once issued a pronouncement that if an Ahmadi Muslim intentionally forsook only one prayer over a period of ten years then he could not be considered a true devotee of Ahmadiyyat—the True Islam.

The Promised Messiah has affirmed that some effort is required to rise early in the morning before sunrise, perform ablution and offer prayers; but without self-discipline there can be no worthwhile progress. This truth applies to spiritual development no less than it does to physical development or to advancement in any secular field.

A Muslim should be anxious to make every moment of his life worthwhile and to avoid idleness; and in order to achieve this purpose he must keep his mind and body alert and virile. All types of slovenly behaviour should be eradicated. The manner in which he sits, stands and moves about reveal significant points of character. Slouching in armchairs and sofas, leaning up against some object for support, shuffling along the streets are unsalutary habits indicative of laziness. Muscles and mind are inter-related, when the muscles become lazy the mind becomes lazy; and vice-a-versa.

The span of human life is incomparable with the age of the universe; and one third of that is usually passed in sleep; so time for up-and-doing is very short. It has been said that idleness is the sepulchre of a living man. The ambitious spiritual wayfarer knows that laziness is an obstacle to his progress and he is watchful never to be the victim in the following lines:

*"He slept beneath the moon,
He basked beneath the sun,
He lived a life of going-to-do,
And died with nothing done."*

(James Albery)

PRIDE

"God has revealed to me saying 'Show humility so that no one may rise above another, nor pride himself above another.'" (Holy Prophet)

Pride has been the downfall of many a spiritual leader. It is a subtle and surreptitious destroyer of faith which does its hellish work slowly and silently like a creeping cancer. Time witnesses pillar after pillar of faith crashing to the ground until eventually the inner temple of God collapses in a heap of rubble. No doubt a new temple can be built on the ruins of the old but not without a sincere rededication to God because the message of the Holy Quran offers hope to those who have fallen or gone astray:

'...those who repent and amend and hold fast to Allah and are sincere in their obedience to Allah; these are among the believers. And Allah will soon bestow a great reward upon the believers.' (4:147)

Dignity and self-respect should not be mistaken for pride for they are virtues while the latter is a sin.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, has said that pride is a form of *shirk*, i.e., the setting up of equals with God. He has said that it is a despicable characteristic and has advised everyone to make sure that no vestige of this guilt dwells within them.

Disobedience to those who are in authority is a common demonstration of pride. It has led to the spiritual downfall of many prominent Muslims. Islam teaches that it is incumbent to obey those who are placed in authority providing one is not called upon to do something contrary to the teachings of Islam. In religious affairs it matters not who is appointed Iman or leader—he must be obeyed. The Prophet has said:

'Hear and obey even though a person with a head as small as a dried raisin be appointed to rule over you.'

(Bukhari)

Pride sometimes enters the hearts of public speakers and lecturers who are more concerned in impressing their audience with their supposed eloquence than they are in impressing the significance of their message upon their hearts. The Promised Messiah spoke on this matter at an Annual Conference in Qadian. Some speakers are under the impression that the louder and faster they talk the more favourable impression they make upon their listeners; but the truth is that no cultured and intelligent person is deceived by their veneer when the vibrations of their voices are empty of heartfelt magnetism. While it is not denied that loudness of voice is often necessary, especially when addressing a large gathering without the aid of a

microphone; nevertheless, what counts most is the tone of the voice which should ring with earnest and sincere vibrations free of any streak of veneer.

JEALOUSY

'O people, guard against jealousy, for jealousy eats up virtues as fire burns the fuel.'
(Holy Prophet)

Uninvited, jealousy steals its way into the heart and who is there in the whole wide world who has not been a victim of this curse? It descends upon the individual when least expected; and the best of men are not immune from its fiery fever which sets aflame the brain and destroys all peace of mind. The Holy Bible says:

'Jealousy is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.' (Song of Solomon 8:6)

A poet has aptly described the consequences of this devilish virus:

*Thou ugliest fiend of hell! Thy deadly venom
Preys on my vitals, turns the healthful hue
Of my fresh cheeks to haggard sallowness,
And drinks my spirit up!* (H. More)

Jealousy undermines brotherhood which is one of the basic ideals of Islam. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace be on him) has said:

'Do not be jealous of each other, nor envious, nor do sever mutual connection, but all be servants of one God like brothers.'

Jealousy has led men and women to acts of hatred, infamy and murder. The sons of Jacob were so possessed by jealousy that they contemplated killing their younger brother Joseph:

'When they said 'Verily, Joseph and his brother are dearer to our father than we are, although we are a strong party. Surely our father is in manifest error. Kill Joseph or cast him out to some distant land, so that our father's favour may become exclusively yours and you may thereafter become a righteous People'.' (12:9,10)

More often than not where there is love there is also jealousy. It seems paradoxical but is nevertheless true. Love rarely runs smooth and the intrusion of jealousy is one of the major causes.

Like a snake in the grass, jealousy raises its venomous head in

numerous affairs of life almost as naturally as the sex urge rises and pulsates within the body. All people, except perhaps the prophets of God, are assailed from time to time by this satanic force. The problem is how to combat it. We should constantly seek the protection of Allah through earnest prayer and pray for those very persons towards whom our feelings of jealousy extend. The Quran is a cure for all spiritual diseases and a firm conviction that the clouds of jealousy will vanish is the best positive approach coupled with supplication to God to ease and cure our mental fever whether it be high or low. The Promised Messiah was blessed with a mind as cool as ice and himself said:

'I have reduced the feeling of resentment and anger in my mental attitude.'

The ideal is never to speak disparagingly of people in a contemptuous tone. If it is necessary to refer to some negative characteristic in a person then it would be better to do so in a quiet manner without bitterness.

'May Allah be our protector from the evil of the envier when he envies.' (113:6)

FEAR

'He who fears God fears none.' (Hazrat Ali)

The spread and establishment of Islam in Arabia during the twenty-three years' ministry of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace be on him) was to a great extent due to the extraordinary courage displayed by the early Muslim converts and not the desire for power and booty as some ignorant critics of Islam have contended. No clear minded person believes that three hundred and thirteen ill equipped Muslims marched from Medina to face the might of the powerful Meccan army at Badr for the purpose of winning spoils of war. The truth is that those few loyal and devoted servants of God—outnumbered by three to one—knew that if they were exterminated by the idolatrous force of Mecca then the very existence of Islam would be at stake. Charged to the full with love for Islam and the Holy Prophet they fought with the will to win and subsequently secured a resounding victory against the overwhelming forces of Godlessness.

Muslims today are faced with the gigantic task of reviving the

pristine purity of Islam throughout the world; and this spiritual crusade was initiated through Divine Will by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah and Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement. This work calls for courage in order to meet and tackle successfully opposition, hardships and multifarious problems.

An Ahmadi has to be prepared to stand alone in the presence of his detractors. There can be no compromise with the whims and fancies of those who wish to change, modify or ignore Islamic ideals to suit their own interests and wayward inclinations. Unfortunately many a good Ahmadi has suffered from the baneful influence not only of a totally un-Islamic environment but also from the society of his less enlightened and easy-going Muslim brethren who lack that spirit of Islam which the Promised Messiah came to revive. The temptation has been too strong and by regrettably adopting the least line of resistance the light of faith no longer shines in their faces.

A believer loses his individuality and becomes lost in the drifting crowd once he hesitates and deviates from the right course for fear of what others might think of him. He should live his own life, stand upon his own feet and not be influenced by what the crowd thinks because in the world today ninety-nine per cent of humanity is drifting in the wrong direction.

Man is inclined to love money because he fears for his security and is more anxious for the treasures of this world than those of the Hereafter. An Ahmadi Muslim is called upon to donate a minimum of one sixteenth of his income; and many give much more; but there are those who give less than the prescribed amount and even nothing at all. It would appear that they are hypnotised by fear of the world more than by fear of God. God says in the Holy Quran:

...And fear Allah that you may prosper. (2:191)

'And fear Allah and know that Allah is with those who fear Him.' (2:195)

Loss of wealth and property, loss of friends and loved ones, loss of honour and prestige, loss of comforts and amenities, loss of opportunities for material progress, loss of health and life are some of the basic fears that haunt man and often come between him and his religious obligations:

'The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.' (F. D. Roosevelt)

Fear of punishment and fear of what others may think are also conditions of the mind which are liable to cause a believer to digress from the path of rectitude and truth. Protection from succumbing to fear and strength to meet successfully the storms and temptations of life should be our constant prayer.

LOVED ONES BEFORE GOD

'Say, if your fathers, and your sons, and your brethren, and your wives and your kinsfolk, and the wealth you have acquired, and the trade whose dullness you fear, and the dwellings which you love are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and striving in His cause, then wait until Allah comes with His judgement; and Allah guides not the disobedient people.' (9:24)

A devoted relative, friend or even servant will risk his or her life for the sake of a loved one; so strong are the ties of some human relationships. Indeed, love is a virtue providing it is not merely an exhibition of instinct but harnessed and controlled in a good and proper manner. Love, service and loyalty to God should be one's first love; but its reality can only be proved through demonstration under severe test because actions do not always conform with the tongue. God says in the Holy Quran:

'Wealth and children are an ornament of the life of this world. But enduring good works are better in the sight of thy Lord in respect of immediate reward, and better in respect of future hope.' (18:47)

No doubt the ties of human life are usually very strong; but in the Holy Quran a Muslim is warned that should the occasion arise then he must be prepared to sacrifice his family attachments for the sake of God. No doubt the demand is high but so are the ideals of God high; and in order to reach high, one must be prepared to climb high.

9. SUCCESS THROUGH FAILURE

*"All my successes have been built
on my failures".* (Disraeli)

The desire to progress in one way or another is embedded to a lesser or greater extent in human nature. It is a distinctive characteristic in man which differentiates him from all lower forms of creation. Today it may be true to say that the acquisition of wealth is the main avenue of progress along which man seeks to advance.

The urge to progress is a healthy one, providing it does not clash with the teachings of Islam. The Muslim who devotes his whole attention to increasing his wealth and neglects his Islamic duties is progressing in the wrong direction.

The primary concern of a Muslim should be his spiritual progress. While advancement in worldly affairs is encouraged and commended by Islam, nevertheless, greater stress is laid on the development of the soul and progress along the path of righteousness; for God says in the Holy Quran that the most honoured in His sight are those who are the most righteous.

It is unfortunate that most men do not look beyond the grave. They give attention only to their material progress while the man of God does not neglect his spiritual progress. He knows that his love for God should excel his love for the things of this world. He yearns to develop within himself the attributes of God; and while he does not ignore the responsibilities of life he is ever watchful in avoiding all temptations liable to hinder his spiritual advancement. He constantly seeks the Grace and Protection of God and fully realises that his real self is not his physical body but rather his spiritual body which knows no death. God says in the Holy Quran:

*"And the life of this world is only a play and a sport, but surely the
abode of the Hereafter is better for those who are pious. Will you not
then have some sense?"* (6:33)

*"O My people, this life of the world is but a temporary provision;
and the Hereafter is certainly the home for permanent stay".* (40:40)

The desire to make constant spiritual progress should surge like a

restless ocean in the heart of every Muslim. He should not rest content in living a mediocre life with the thought that higher advancement is reserved only for the chosen few. He should endeavour to excel others and strive to pass even those who seem to be far ahead of him. His daily prayer and aspiration should be that each day should bear witness to an improvement in his spiritual development. Spiritual competition is a healthy exercise endorsed by the Holy Quran:

"... Vie, then, with one another in good works", (2:149)

In the field of commerce the spirit of competition is ever active and those who outstrip their competitors become the leaders of business and industry. Similarly, in the field of religion the desire to be among the most favoured in the sight of God is a wholesome and rewarding endeavour; and the lead cannot be taken unless others are overtaken; but the race must be run in a spirit of humility wherein the motive is only to win the pleasure of God and reflect His attributes for the glory of Islam.

The Muslim who has little or no concern about his spiritual development and progress has not yet understood the essence of Islam and the purpose of existence. When his body ceases to inhale the breath of life, his earthly treasures will no longer be a source of comfort to him and only his dark and empty soul will cross the border into the realm of eternity; but the translucent soul of the blessed servant of God will shine like a radiant star in the firmament of the Hereafter.

Health, wealth and knowledge are gifts of God which should all be used for His Glory. Hazrat Mirza Ghalam Ahmad—the Promised Messiah and Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement—has written:

*"...all our powers and organs and whatever belongs to us should be
surrendered to God and devoted to His service".*

An earnest Muslim is always attentive to his self-improvement and in order to progress far he must be prepared to render and submit all his faculties and possessions in the way of God. That is to say his love for God should reign supreme over all other kinds of attachments. Submission to God is the meaning of essence of the spirit of Islam. The Queen of Scots was executed in the year 1587 on the orders of Queen Elizabeth. Due to her close attachment with France it is said that the Scottish Queen died with the name of "Calais" engraved upon her heart. Likewise the word "submission" should be engraved upon the hearts of all Muslims. God says in the Holy Quran:

"Say, my prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of the worlds". (6:163).

FAILURE VERSUS DEFEAT

The meaning of failure and defeat are not synonymous. Whereas defeat suggests conquest, failure need be no more than a temporary set-back. This is certainly the meaning given to failure by the go-ahead and successful minded individual who is resolute and has firmly implanted in his mind the achievement of a definite goal in life. He constantly visualises its ultimate fulfilment and has no doubt that it will sooner or later materialise. He knows that positive thinking is the road to success and he regards no obstacle in his path to be a permanent barrier; as soon as one arises he proceeds to smash it down; and then he climbs over its battered remnants and proceeds onwards towards his goal.

The spineless individual throws up his hands in despair before the first hurdle. He moans that circumstances are against him, whereas he has no one to blame but himself for his stagnant condition throughout life. The progressive individual looks upon every problem, obstacle and adversity as a test of strength and character. He is determined to turn every difficulty to good account and prove them to be blessings in disguise. A great American once wrote:

"I am thankful for the adversities which have crossed my pathway, for they have taught me tolerance, sympathy, self control, perseverance and some other virtues I might never have known." (Napoleon Hill)

PROGRESSIVE LIVING

Progressive and successful living depends on positive thinking and the refusal to regard failure as defeat. Success depends upon successful thinking. Dominant thoughts of the mind reproduce themselves into reality. One should, therefore, close the door of the mind upon all negative thoughts. It has truly been said that thoughts are things. Were it not for the creative power of thought in man, the condition of the human race and the world in general would be exactly the same as it was in the beginning except for those changes brought about by the laws of nature. The progress of man, inventions of the world, cultivation of crops, advancement of medicine all germinated from the seed of thought which the creative power of the mind translated into material existence and reality.

Thought is the basis of achievement. It possesses the God-given power of creative energy which man may tap and use to his advantage and progress in the spiritual field as much as in any other field of life. Man creates, unfolds and develops that in which he lives mentally; and what he can accomplish in practical life through the proper use of the creative power of his mind is extraordinary and almost unbelievable.

Man is as he thinks. He is the architect of his own character and the captain of his own soul. He possesses the God-given capacity of making his dreams come true once he understands the chemistry of the mind.

The life of Marshal MacMahon of France is one of many which illustrates the truth of the equation:

"Desire plus continued thoughts on the thing desired equals the result desired."

When a boy, his cherished dream and ambition was to become Marshal of France. He resolved to climb to that position and fixed it as the goal of his life. The desire within was intense and the mental visualisation of himself arrayed in the majestic uniform of a marshal was always vivid in his mind. It is not a matter of wonder, therefore, that he did eventually attain the rank of marshal; and that he went further than that to become the President of France. A man of his mental calibre is an inspiration for all who want to progress in life; and there are few better ways of filling the odd moments of the day than by reading the biographies of great men who have raised themselves from failure to success.

It may be well understood how the power of this philosophy can elevate and speed a man towards his spiritual goal once he is aware of its inner presence and chooses to galvanise it into action. The creative energy of the mind needs only to be properly instructed and it will respond like an obedient servant. It will work for and produce that which it is commanded to do provided it does not run counter to the will of God; and it is always the way of God to guide those who seek Him and help those who strive in His path towards purification of the soul. This should be the most sought-after goal in life and most certainly the science of correct thinking is necessary requisite for its attainment.

EASE FOLLOWS HARDSHIP

Life is a battle ground from which every successful man and woman has emerged victorious. They were never despaired of victory but fought until they claimed their prize. Then the inner experience of a new sensation charged every fibre of their body; and it is particularly delightful when the prize is a heavenly one gained after a long spiritual struggle.

The spiritual wayfarer enters new realms of paradise on earth as he continues to overcome hurdle after hurdle. Living becomes a joy and an enchantment and the storms of worldly distractions no longer blow him from pillar to post. He enjoys the gentle breeze of heaven which refreshes and purifies the inner recesses of his heart. He has studied at the university of hard knocks and is now reaping the reward of his patience and perseverance, remembering God's promise that ease follows hardship:

"Surely there is ease after hardship." (24:6)

"Allah will soon bring about ease after hardship." (65:8).

Hardship is inevitable:

"We have created men to face hardships." (90:5)

The devotee of God regards hardships as blessings because he knows that by accepting them patiently and courageously he will not only win the approbation of God but also grow in spiritual stature; and this is the nourishment he is seeking more than anything else.

THE MOUNTAINEER

Mount Everest is the highest mountain in the world and for many years climbers attempted to conquer its summit. Time after time they failed and the perilous venture cost many a man his life, but dogged persistence won in the end and the mountain was mastered by a team of climbers in 1953.

The lowest slopes of ascent are easy going for the mountaineer; but as the gradient begins to rise, progress becomes slower. As he climbs yet higher he is harassed by bitter cold and howling winds. Then as the summit draws nearer the thin air causes breathing difficulties and he has to apply his oxygen mask. Every step of the last stage of the ascent has to be hacked out of solid ice and finally he has to muster his last ounce of strength to haul himself to the top. The mountaineer exhibits great powers of endurance; and such exemplary endurance should mark the efforts of every sincere Muslim in his struggle to attain his spiritual goal.

10. RIVERS OF HONEY

A description of the Garden promised to the righteous:

"Therein are rivers of water which corrupts not; and rivers of milk of which the taste changes not; and rivers of wine, a delight to those who drink, and rivers of clarified honey. And in it they will have all kinds of fruit and forgiveness from their Lord." (47:16)

The above verse is a similitude of paradise and not a literal description, for Islam teaches that the blessings of the Hereafter are beyond human conception:

"And no soul knows what joy of the eyes is kept hidden from them, as a reward of their good works." (32:18)

Commenting on this verse, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) said: *"The blessings of paradise are things which the eye hath not seen, nor hath the ear heard, nor has it entered the heart of man to conceive of them."*

God has compared the joys of paradise with some of the good things of this world, thereby enabling man to have a faint idea of their gloriousness and the nature of that celestial life. As water refreshes and cleanses so in the next life will the righteous be spiritually refreshed and cleansed. Milk indicates spiritual knowledge and it is a blessed omen to see oneself drinking milk in a dream. Wine signifies love for God; a wine which does not intoxicate (37:48); and honey signifies the sweet efficacy of God's Graciousness and Mercy.

Elsewhere in the Holy Quran the names of some fruits associated with paradise have been mentioned such as dates, grapes and pomegranates. It is not without significance that all the produce referred to in connection with paradise are highly nutritious and beneficial commodities. Dates have been acclaimed the most valuable of food fruits. Grapes are not only nutritious but possess remarkable curative properties capable of even ridding the body of cancerous growths. The nutritional value of milk is a matter of general knowledge and the wonders of honey will now be elaborated upon.

Honey has been commended in the Holy Quran and special reference has been made to the bee:

"And thy Lord has inspired the bee saying, 'Make thou houses in the

hills and in the trees and in the trellises which they build. Then eat of every kind of fruit, and follow the ways of the Lord that have been made easy for thee.' There comes forth from their bellies a drink of varying hues. Therin is cure for men. Surely, in that is a sign for a people who reflect."
(16:69-70)

The bee has been inspired by God. All creatures, in fact, are inspired by God. There are many forms of inspiration—the highest being verbal revelation. Animals, insects, fish, and every kind of creature are guided by instinct which is a medium of divine guidance. Even the newborn child is prompted by the 'Cause of all causes' to seek the breast of its mother. Allah is the Source of all knowledge, the Author of life, from whom all guidance originates.

Intuition is another commoner form of inspiration. All of a sudden a problem is solved by a flash of intuition entering the brain like a brilliant meteor breaking into the atmosphere from outer space. Intuition should always be respected and obeyed even in opposition to reason. Intuition comes from beyond while reasoning is a product of the brain alone.

Honey is one of nature's finest foods containing vitamins, minerals, and healing properties. It is quickly absorbed into the system giving immediate energy to the body. A spoonful of honey dissolved in hot water is an excellent tonic for fatigue. Tea and coffee contain harmful and habit forming drugs known as theine and caffeine which merely soothe the nerves temporarily. Tea and coffee contain no food value whatsoever. Like smokers, tea drinkers and coffee drinkers become irritable, restless, dull, and listless when these beverages are unavailable. They become dependent upon them for relief, whereas Islam teaches that one should not become the slave of any unsalutary habit. There are millions of people including housewives who are unable to maintain their efficiency unless they keep themselves regularly fortified with cups of tea. Honey is immediately absorbed into the system and quickly revitalises every cell in the body; and it is not habit forming.

Smoking is a pernicious habit. It weakens the nerves and pollutes every cell in the body. Tobacco is a poisonous drug which leaves its impress not only on every organ of the body but on the soul as well. Self purification of body and soul should be the goal of every Muslim.

A smoker does not only foul himself but he fouls the atmosphere. He is a nuisance to every health loving person who appreciates heaven's pure air. Why should he contaminate the air which others are compelled to breathe? A jar of life giving honey can be purchased for the same price as a packet of poisonous cigarettes!

Not only is honey an excellent food but also, as the Holy Quran states, it is a "cure for men." Its medicinal properties are many. Honey is a natural laxative and no one who eats it daily along with a normal diet suffers from constipation. Honey is nature's best sweetener whereas refined white sugar has been described as a 'nutritional death trap' as it is deprived of the valuable nutriment which are found in unrefined or brown sugar. White sugar is constipating while brown sugar is a laxative. Honey is perfectly safe for babies and does not cause diarrhea. Should a baby become constipated, honey added to its milk is an effective remedy. Some children wet their beds but a spoonful of honey given at night time will overcome the habit. Warm water and honey is as good as any cough mixture; and being a sedative it relaxes the muscles and promotes natural sleep. It is, therefore, a remedy for insomnia or sleeplessness and helpful for fretful children who cry at night. Honey is an antiseptic and may safely be applied to wounds. It heals wounds and burns very successfully. Taken internally it relieves pains associated with arthritis—inflammation of the joints. A well-known beekeeper has said:

"Honey really does a remarkable job on arthritis."

In conclusion the following observation proclaimed by reliable persons who live close to the land are worth our attention:

1. Beekeepers do not have kidney trouble.
2. They have a clear complexion, good eyesight, and no lameness.
3. Among those who eat honey and keep bees there is no cancer or paralysis.

There are innumerable species of insects in the world. The Holy Quran has singled out one of them—the bee. God has focussed special attention upon this insect. It is indeed a remarkable creature and the drink that comes forth from its belly is a remarkable substance. A chapter in the Holy Quran has been named *The Bee*. Let us enjoy the material honey of this world and pray that we may also enjoy the spiritual honey of the next world.

11. OUR ILLUSORY WORLD

"It is a palace paved smooth with slabs of glass." (23:75)

Belief in life after death is a basic teaching of Islam. The Quran contains abundant passages on this subject. Denial of the Hereafter deviates a person from the Right Path:

"And those who believe not in the Hereafter, are indeed deviating from that path." (23:75)

It is unfortunate that many people give insufficient care and attention to the preparation of their souls for the next life; and it is even more unfortunate that there are numerous people who do not believe in life after death at all. They are unable to conceive of any other kind of existence other than life on this planet. They are prepared to believe only in what is apparent to them through the aid of their physical senses— sight, touch, smell, hearing, and taste.

God says in the Holy Quran that a believer is one who believes in the unseen (2:4). This is not a blind belief but one which is upheld by scriptural authority and confirmed by personal experience.

Those who hold the view that this universe and all things in it are composed of solid substance are under an illusion. We propose to show that this world and all that is in it is not really as it appears. There is no such thing as matter in the understood sense of the word. When this great truth is understood then the existence and nature of life after death is no longer a stumbling block. This world is a spiritual realm as is also the next one but their states are different.

ANALYSIS OF MATTER

A pilot flying above a beach sees below him a golden strip stretching along the coastline. Close inspection reveals that what he sees is a mass of tiny grains of sand. Microscopic inspection shows that each grain of sand is composed of innumerable atoms which are so small that a million times a million of them would not make a lump large enough to be seen by the human eye. Chemists had thought that the atom itself was the smallest particle but now it is known that it is composed of even smaller sub-atomic particles known as electrons, neutrons, and protons.

All things are made of atoms and each one is practically all empty space. The protons and neutrons form its nucleus. The electrons which vary in number in different kinds of atoms revolve around the nucleus at great speed as the planets of our solar system revolve around the sun. Indeed every atom is a miniature solar system floating in space. Keeping in mind the size of an atom the distances separating the electrons from the central nucleus have been compared to the distances separating the planets from the sun.

There is no wonder that radio waves, x-rays, and other kinds of rays can pass through the hardest rock or steel. Switch on a radio, seal it in a trunk, and it will continue to play. The waves pass through the steel as easily as an apparition passes through the door of a room.

Almost all of solid matter is empty space in which not one atom or sub-particle is touching another. Our sense of vision is extremely restricted and what we are able to see around us is different to what it seems. We live in an illusory world.

Howbeit, matter—as we call it—does exist. What is matter? Whence from has it come?

MATTER IS ENERGY

There exists the law of cause and effect. Something cannot come from nothing. This is a self-evident truth. Islam teaches that God is the Original Cause of all things. He is Unique in as much as He has no beginning or end. He is the Creator of all things:

"He is indeed the Supreme Creator." (36:82)

"He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner." (59:25)

There arises the question whether matter was created in one direct stroke by God or did it evolve from immaterial forces which already existed in the great void?

Einstein (1879-1955) is the greatest name in mathematical physics in the twentieth century. He proved that matter and energy are one and the same thing in different forms. Both are interchangeable. Matter has been converted into energy and energy has also been converted into matter. Energy was present before the creation of matter which is a manifestation of that energy from which it evolved.

Thought is intangible energy which lay behind the creation of the universe and all the multifarious and intricate systems and creations within it. In the human and animal kingdom thought-energy demonstrates its power through the brain.

Scientists have built apparatus which can chart the vibrations of thought energy emanating from the brain. Thought energy and other kinds of energy existed prior to the creation of the universe; and some of that energy became concentrated into matter.

We live in an ethereal world and when this truth is grasped then the existence of a higher ethereal world called the Hereafter lies within reason.

CREATIVE VIBRATIONS

We have seen that the myriad orbs which adorn the heavens are embodiments of energy from which they originally evolved; and that matter and energy are no more than one and the same thing in different guise.

Energy vibrates on different frequencies and wave lengths. The whole universe is composed of one gigantic network of vibrations. Different kinds of energy vibrate on different frequencies producing their effects accordingly. The next world is as real as this world with the difference that it functions on different levels of vibration to those on which this world functions. This will be clarified as we proceed.

While we are bound to this planet our senses are tuned only to the vibrations of this universe. We are unaware of the nature and conditions of the next world which vibrates on frequencies beyond the ability of our senses to pick up and interpret. God says in the Holy Quran:

"And no soul knows what joy of the eyes is kept hidden from them as a reward for their good deeds." (32:18)

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) has said:

"They are such as the eye has not seen them, the ear has not heard of them and the mind cannot conceive of them."

The television set which has been designed to pick up certain channels only is unable to show on its screen the programmes on other channels. Similarly our senses are limited in their

performances and are unable to view worlds operating on frequencies for which they have not been designed to observe or comprehend.

We are conscious of vibrations within a fixed range of frequencies. The human ear, for example, is able to hear sound frequencies which vibrate only from twenty to twenty thousand cycles per second. It is deaf to all sound vibrations oscillating beyond the extremes of this range.

Bats emit a shrill ultra squeak which we cannot hear. These squeaks serve as a kind of radar whereby the bat listens for echoes bouncing back from any object in its path thereby enabling it to avoid collision.

There is the silent dog whistle. The owner who blows it hears nothing; but its ultra high notes are heard by the dog which will respond to the call.

All kinds of activity is going on around us in the silent and invisible unknown. Our physical senses are deaf and blind to them. Sometimes, however, through the latent power of extra-sensory perception we are able to perceive and learn some of these veiled mysteries.

Light is a wave motion. Every colour is a series of vibrations. The vibrations are conveyed through the eye to the brain where they are converted into the respective colours they represent. A prism will break up a ray of white light into the seven colours of the rainbow—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. These seven colours are called the spectrum. All other visible colours can be made through the mixing of various colours in the spectrum. However, there are some colours which the eye cannot see because their rates of vibration are beyond the power of the eye to absorb. These known invisible light rays are ultra violet and infra red. They have been discovered by the spectroscope which is an instrument for studying the spectrum. It has been claimed that the seven perceived colours within the spectrum are infinitesimal compared to the unperceived ones.

All around us vibrates the great unknown and different kinds of creation to which our normal senses are insensible.

12. IMMORTAL LIFE

"And thou, O soul at peace Return to thy Lord well pleased with Him and He well pleased with thee. So enter thou among my chosen servants, and enter thou My Garden." (89:28-31)

There is no doubt about it that man's real and permanent entity is not his physical body but rather an ethereal entity which pervades the former; and the heart of the latter is the soul.

The Quran throws more light on the nature of the soul and the Hereafter than any other scriptures. Nevertheless, man's understanding of this subject will always remain extremely limited. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

"And they ask thee concerning the soul. Say, 'The soul is by the command of my Lord; and of the knowledge thereof you have been given but a little'." (17:86)

"And no soul knows what joy of the eyes is kept hidden for them, as a reward for their good works." (32:18)

The Holy Prophet has said:

"The blessings of paradise are things which the eye has not seen, the ear not heard, nor has the mind ever conceived."

We shall learn, in the pages to follow, knowledge given by Islam about the soul and the existence of realms of life which vibrate on frequencies higher than that of this material universe and which can not be seen or fully realised by the physical senses. In addition to information given by Islam, some knowledge and realisation of this subject may be acquired through (1) intuition, (2) psychic experience, and (3) spiritual experience.

INTUITION

This is a power of the mind which is able to realise a truth without the aid of reasoning or analysis. A flash of intuition reveals to a person the solution of a problem or secret of an invention which years of research and study failed to disclose. The flash may come when awake or asleep as the mind is awake twenty four hours of the day even though the body may be in restful repose.

Premonitions are often the result of an intuitive warning. A man who has booked a flight to New York feels impelled for no apparent reason to change it for a later one. The plane on which he had first booked his passage crashes and all on board are killed.

Inventors, artists, poets, authors, scientists have been among the numerous persons throughout the ages who have testified to the miraculous power of intuition. Edison was but one of many inventors who had secrets of his discoveries come to him through an intuitive flash. It is said of Michaelangelo who was one of the world's greatest geniuses and intellects that the solutions of some of his greatest works came to him while asleep; and there are numerous others who have been guided and enlightened at unexpected moments when their thoughts were at rest or even dwelling on some totally different matter.

Normally knowledge is acquired through the five senses—sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch—and is accumulated from information, memory, and experience with the aid of which reasoning is developed. Intuitive knowledge stems from a higher and independent source and is not the result of mental exercise or reasoning any more than the young squirrel which has never known a winter, nevertheless, gathers and stores a supply of nuts to provide for its nourishment well in advance of the coming cold season. Its actions are guided by instinct from a higher power and not as a result of experience, instruction, or deduction.

Knowledge of spiritual truths pertaining to matters in the spirit world may be revealed to a person through intuitive guidance. Intuition is a form of divine inspiration which has been and continues to be experienced by people of every class, culture, and faith.

PSYCHIC EXPERIENCE

This is an experience which cannot be explained by any understood natural law and is, therefore, often termed supernatural. Such an experience is attributed to the power of extra-sensory perception which has the capacity of revealing things which the normal physical senses are unable to detect or explain. Examples of psychic experiences are:

1. In an apparent waking state a person clearly sees an event occurring at a distant place which is proved to have happened in the

exact manner and at the very same time. Such an experience may also happen when asleep.

2. While in full consciousness the apparition of a living or dead friend or relative appears before a person in all reality and even speaks to him.
3. A person hears his father's voice clearly calling out to him and on investigation it is established that at that very moment the father died several hundred miles away.
4. A student sees and memorises in a dream questions on an examination paper. A few days later when sitting for his exam the identical questions are on the paper and he has no difficulty in answering them.

These are only a few of the multifarious kinds of psychic phenomena which are experienced by people throughout the world irrespective of race or creed. The piles of amassed testimonies collected and investigated by the societies for Psychic Research in Great Britain, U.S.A. and elsewhere are more than sufficient to establish the truth of psychic phenomena.

Realisation and limited enlightenment on the operation of various laws and secrets of the unseen have been unfolded to a lesser or greater extent to many persons through their personal experience of psychic phenomena.

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

A spiritual experience is a soul moving experience. It is charged with the presence of God as distinct from a psychic experience which normally leaves no heavenly impression upon the soul although it may be very similar to a spiritual experience where in both cases voices may be heard, distant places visited or seen, knowledge vouchsafed, visits from departed souls, and future events foretold. Frequently in spiritual experiences the unmistakable Divine Voice is heard and the presence of God palpably felt. The eyes of the soul see beyond earthly horizons into realms which reveal the truth of immortality. Spiritual phenomena are more matured than psychic phenomena though it in no way minimises the remarkable effects and influences of the latter which has opened the minds of thousands to the fact that there is more to life than earthbound existence.

THE REAL SELF

Our real self is an immortal spirit or soul-body which is attached to a body of flesh which sooner or later dies; but we never die. We are a soul with a body attached to it; not a body with a soul attached to it. In order to see, know, and understand ourselves we have to keep our eyes turned inwards. Although both bodies are inter-related, the existence of the soul-body—our real self—is not dependent on the physical body except in as much as the soul body—our real self—is created along with the physical body during the months of development in the womb. The birth of the soul is a point which has been discussed by the Promised Messiah—the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Community—in his book *The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam*. The soul body—our real self—is as much alive after death of the physical body as it was before its expiration. We are immortal.

PURPOSE OF LIFE

"We have not created the jinn and the men but that they shall worship me."
(51:57)

Worship of God is not confined only to prayer and meditation but embraces every thought, word and action; for whatever we think, say or do for the sake of God is an act of worship.

While we are connected with this world our goal in life should be self-purification. We should seek the attainment of this goal through prayer and constant effort in reflecting the attributes of God in our general behaviour. High is the goal and tremendous the task; efforts made in this direction are always most rewarding. We should never despair despite our failures and weaknesses but rather find inspiration in the following words of Hazrat Mizra Bashir-ud-Din Mahmood Ahmad:

'Islam rescues man from despair and tells him that he can, in spite of his errors and mistakes, attain to the purity of mind and conduct which is the highest goal of man. It thus encourages him to make constant efforts towards virtue and purity and enables him ultimately to arrive at this goal.'

Real prosperity lies in self-purification which should be the cherished goal of our lives:

'Verily he truly prospers who purifies himself, remembers the name of his Lord and offers prayers.'
(87:15)

Commenting on the object of man's earthly life, the Promised Messiah has said:

"The real object of man's life according to the Holy Quran is, therefore, a true knowledge and worship of God and a total resignation to His will that whatever is said or done is said or done for His sake only."

The goal of existence on earth has also been beautifully epitomised by Hazrat Ali:

"All the occupations of a wise man are for his self reform, all his cares for the benefit of the next world and all his endeavours for the good of the life to come."

Life on this planet is the beginning of an eternal journey on which we live attached to a body of flesh and bone which is left behind to decay after we quit it and pass on to higher ethereal realms. Those realms are as real as this world and all the other innumerable orbs of the universe revolving and rotating in the vast ocean of space. Life is short and a time for preparation. No wasted moment can be retrieved. The Promised Messiah has warned us:

"And who told them that life is long? There is no season for death. It may overtake you at any time. So we must value whatever time we have. We will not have these times again."

Our real inner self is immortal so our eyes should always be focussed ahead and not rivetted upon the things of this world. May Allah sharpen our perception of spiritual truths and enable us to fulfill successfully the purpose of life in the world of material environment.

ETHERIC OR SOUL BODY

The mysteries of the soul cannot be unravelled by brain power; but there is no doubt that every human body houses a soul. This truth has been confirmed by God in the Holy Quran which throws more light on the subject than any other scripture.

Man possesses a double or ethereal counterpart of his physical body which serves as a temporary body for the soul after death. This subtle etheric soul body also has the capacity of detaching itself from the physical body even before death and the large number of persons throughout the world and in all ages who have experienced this phenomenon bear testimony of its existence. The real self is an intangible spirit body which normally dwells within and coincides

with the physical body; and within the spirit body lies the nucleus of eternal life—the soul.

During sleep the soul body detaches itself from the physical body and possesses full consciousness while it is on its travels. Before awakening it is drawn back into the physical body and normally the person has no recollection of what occurred; but sometimes a person does remember and is able to describe the experience. An anonymous gentleman wrote from Plymouth:

"I suddenly discovered that I was above my body looking directly down upon it. It was lying on the bed as clear as day. I had a good searching look at the face in particular and thought how strange it was to be now looking at myself just as other people see me. The experience was very real and definite indeed ... nothing imaginary about it. I know that the experience was an actual fact"

(The Phenomena of Astral Projection)

Mr. Bruce Belfrage writes in his autobiography:

"I had a very serious illness from which I almost died. One night I left my body and saw it quite clearly lying motionless on the bed. It all seemed perfectly natural and experience proved to me, quite beyond doubt ... that the body and the spirit are quite separate, that the spirit, the real me, cannot be hurt and cannot die."

It is not only in natural sleep that people have out-of-the-body experiences. Patients have had them while under anaesthetics. Mr. J. A. Findlay writes in his book *'Looking Back'*:

"A lady, whose honesty is unquestionable, told me that during the time she was under an anaesthetic, she felt herself standing overlooking her physical body on the operating table. She was interested to follow everything done by the surgeon and nurses, but, what impressed the surgeon when she told him of her experience afterwards, was the fact that she saw him do something to her inside that she could not have dreamed about."

Cases of people who have had the experience of finding themselves outside their physical bodies while under an anaesthetic are numerous. Similar is the case with the sick and dying and also those who are living normally in the best of health. These experiences are not figments of the imagination but absolute genuine occurrences.

Thousands of such cases are on record and are in keeping with the teachings of the Holy Quran which declares that God takes away the souls of everyone not only at the time of death but also at times during their life time:

"And He it is Who takes your souls by night and knows that which you do by day." (6:61)

"Allah takes away the souls of human beings at the time of death; and during their sleep of those that are not yet dead. And He keeps those against which He has decreed death, and sends back the others till an appointed term. In that surely are signs for a people who reflect." (39:43)

This subject is extremely absorbing one in as much as it brightens our spiritual vision, helps us to realise our true self more clearly, encourages us to dive deeper into eternal truths and strengthens our faith in the unseen.

VISIBLE DEPARTURE OF SOUL BODY

There are many accounts on record given by people who have claimed to have seen the soul body leave a person's physical body at the moment of death. No doubt instances of this kind are unusual but for that matter all other kinds of psychic and spiritual phenomena are also unusual. There are persons, by way of example, who have claimed to have seen angels but no God-fearing Muslim will reject their statement on the grounds that such claims are unusual. Now and again people do have visions of angels though we are not conversant with those laws which enable them to see angels; nor are we conversant with those laws which enable people sometimes to observe the departure of the soul body at the time of death; but lack of understanding is not sufficient cause to reject the truth of this phenomenon.

Mr. F. L. Rawson writes in his book *'Life Understood'*:

"In her book 'Little Women' Louisa Alcott relates how at the moment of death, she saw as it were a thin smoke arise from her sister Bertha and vanish. The doctor told her that this was not an hallucination but the life departing visibly. Dr. Patrick O'Donnell says that he has photographed this at the Mercy Hospital, Chicago."

Dr. Robert Crookhall mentions in his book *'Intimations of Immortality'*: "Dr. R. B. Hout also saw the soul-body of his aunt when it was being permanently released at death."

Mrs. Snell, who was a nurse, has stated:

"One evening she (her friend) was taken by convulsions and died in my arms before the doctor had time to arrive... that was the first death at which I had ever assisted. Her heart had hardly ceased to beat when I distinctly saw something like a vapour disengage itself from her, arise from her body, and stop at a short distance from the corpse where it condensed into a form absolutely identical with that of my friend. Later when I became a nurse, an occupation which I followed for twenty years, I assisted at numerous deaths, and immediately after death I always observed the condensation of the etheric form above the body, always identical with the living body, and after condensing it would vanish from my eyes."

The Promised Messiah—the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement—often had the experience of seeing and even conversing with departed souls. He has written in his monumental work *'The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam'*:

"I have personal experience in this matter. Many a time, when fully awake, I have seen visions in which I have seen those who were dead. I have seen many an evil doer and a wicked person with a body quite dark and smoky. I have personal acquaintance with these matters and I assert it strongly that, as Almighty God has said, everybody is granted a body either transparent or dark."

Our real self is not the house of flesh and bone in which we temporarily reside. Unlike the human body which is mortal, our real body is immortal.

DEPARTED SOULS REMEMBER THIS LIFE

The soul is a conscious entity and the Holy Quran tell us in many places that in the new life after death it will remember details of its life in this world. The unbelievers and the wicked will ask that they may be sent back to this world to be given a second chance to win the pleasure of God. Had they no memory of this world then they would not have called upon God to send them back:

"Until when death comes to one of them, he says entreating, 'My

Lord send me back that I may do righteous deeds in the life that I have left behind'." (23:100-101)

"Oh that we might be sent back! And then we would not treat the signs of our Lord as lies and we would be of the believers." (6:28)

The following verses also show that departed souls will hold memories of this life:

"On that day man will remember, but of what avail shall be his remembrance." (89:24)

"The dead think they only tarried a short time in this world." (17:53)

In addition to the aforesaid verses there are also many other similar passages in the Holy Quran.

TRANSITION OF THE SOUL

The soul is the nucleus of our eternal being and manifests its powers always through a body in this world and in the Hereafter. As the soul always needs to operate through a body the question now arises in what kind of body does it dwell after it quits the human frame and enters the spirit world. The answer may well be the etheric body or soul body which varies in degree of radiance or dullness according to the condition of the soul at the time of death. Nevertheless it does not serve the soul as a permanent body.

Islam teaches that following the death of the physical body the soul undergoes a transformation. It may be likened to a drop of sperm which grows and develops in the womb from whence it emerges as a new creation in the form of a fully developed child. Similarly, after death, the soul may be likened to a sperm drop and its temporary body to a womb in which it undergoes a transformation eventually to emerge on the Day of Resurrection as a new spiritual creation. This body now possesses a new soul. The general physical and mental features of a child much depends upon the multifarious inherent characteristics locked within the sperm drop cell. Similarly the condition of the new spiritual body depends much upon the state of the soul when it quitted this world. The new body now develops and matures as the child grows and matures in adult age; and when this process is completed on the Day of Judgment, the gateways of heaven and hell are opened wide.

exact manner and at the very same time. Such an experience may also happen when asleep.

God is Merciful and in His Mercy He has decreed that the punishments of hell will not be everlasting. Wrong-doers will suffer their condign punishments more or less as do convicts in prison after which they will be released and allowed to enter heaven where grades and stages of spiritual rewards and attainments are innumerable. God says in the Holy Quran:

"And for all are grades of rank according to what they did." (46:20)

"Behold, how We have created some of them over others in the present life; and surely, the Hereafter shall be greater in degrees of rank and greater in excellence." (17:22)

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace be on him) has said:

"There are a hundred grades in paradise prepared by Allah for those who fight in the Path of Allah and, in between each, is as great a distance as between earth and heaven." (Bukhari)

The Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement—Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad—has also said:

"Those who accept God here, who lose themselves in divine love and who take their stand on the right path, have in store special honours which would not be attained by other people." (The Will).

The spirit of Islam demands that a sincere and earnest Muslim should never rest content with the thought that he has achieved or done sufficient to earn himself a place in paradise. Keeping in mind that he is immortal he should diligently attend to the development of his real self and not allow the desires of his physical body to interfere with this his noble aspiration. May Allah protect us from the incitements of the devil.

13. DIVINE TRUTHS REFLECTED IN THE UNIVERSE

"Are you in doubt concerning Allah, Maker of the heavens and the earth?" (14:11)

Take a walk on a clear night and look up at the myriads of shining orbs which adorn the heavens. What you observe is only a nook of the universe, yet its vastness and the wonders contained within it surpass our comprehension. The more we ponder over the secrets and marvels of the universe the more do we see reflected in it the attributes of God. A starry night is a perfect setting for the remembrance of God.

INFINITE SPACE

The universe exists in an ocean of space; and as we gaze into the depths of the night sky we are reminded that space is infinite. This is because space is nothing. It is the absence of something; and being nothing it must be limitless and boundless. Were there a limit to the dimensions of space then it must come to an end somewhere, but what would there be at the end? Either there must be something or nothing. If there is something then it must be occupying space; and if there is nothing then the end of space has not been reached. As we deliberate over this self-evident fact we are reminded that God is Eternal and Infinite:

"Allah is He besides Whom there is no God, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsisting." (3:3)

We are also reminded that the life of the soul is infinite. It moves on from one stage to another on its journey of infinite progress. Regarding the souls of the righteous in the life to come, Almighty God says in the Holy Quran:

"Their light will run before them and on their right hands. They will say, 'Our Lord, perfect our light for us and forgive us; surely Thou hast power over all things'." (66:9)

Commenting on this verse Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, has said:

"The unceasing desire for perfection shows clearly that progress in paradise shall be endless. For, when they shall have attained one excellence, they shall not stop there but seeing a higher stage of excellence, shall consider that to which they have attained as imperfect and shall, therefore, desire the attainment of the higher excellence. When they shall have attained to this, they shall yet see another higher excellence and they shall continue to pray for the attainment of higher and higher excellences. This ceaseless desire for perfection shows that they shall be endlessly attaining to excellences."

INCOMPREHENSIBLE UNIVERSE

Although the universe has its boundaries, its domain and function is beyond the comprehension of the human mind to fathom. Unlike space, it is impossible for matter to be limitless. Somewhere in the depths of space there exists the most distant of all the stars, but its location is beyond the range of the most delicate scientific instruments used for probing into the universe.

The distances of the stars from us, and also from one another, are so great that it is inconvenient to measure them in miles. They have to be measured in light years. It is known that light travels 186,000 miles per second and that the nearest star is four and a quarter light years away. That is to say the light from that star takes four and a quarter years to reach this world; or if we work out the distance in miles it is approximately twenty five million million miles. In endeavouring to comprehend such a distance the brain becomes severely taxed; but this distance is almost negligible when compared to the greater astronomical distances which separate us from the stars in the remote regions of heavens. The best light telescope of today can see and photograph clusters of stars four thousand million light years away; and radio telescopes can contact stars six thousand million light years away. These telescopic distances bewilder and stagger our finite minds.

As we cast our eyes across the starlit sky and think upon the insoluble mysteries of the universe we are reminded that one of the attributes of God is '*Latif*'—the Incomprehensible.

THE SUN

The sun shines all the time; but at night it is invisible because then

the side of the globe on which we dwell is hidden from it. Nevertheless we do see its reflected light because it is the light of the sun which illumines the moon and planets.

Similarly God manifests Himself through His chosen servants. They reflect divine light in the same way that the moon and planets reflect sunlight. The prophets of God are bathed in an effulgence of divine light. In fact every Godly person radiates the light of God in proportion to his spiritual status.

Venus is the nearest planet to the earth and appears to shine more brilliantly than the others. As we gaze at this bright orb our thoughts contemplate on the attributes of God; for in such a way they are reflected in the sunny lives of the righteous. We are reminded that we should make earnest endeavour to transmit the light of God's attributes in our lives through thought, word and deed. We should yearn to become aglow with the light of heaven and to develop the fragrance of holiness which is sweeter than the most aromatic perfume. The spiritual charm of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, has been beautifully described by Bhai Abdur Rahman:

'On his face in those days there was a peculiar lustre and a deep inner reflectiveness, tinged with an indefinable peace and joy, and a kind of bright spiritual light which shone on his countenance.'

Munhsi Muhammad Arura testified:

'Another face so pure and lit up with spiritual light, I have never seen in my life. That light and his magnetic personality were for me the greatest argument in his favour. What we constantly hungered for was just an opportunity to have a look of that illumined face.'

Persons who enjoy a measure of spiritual illumination are able to recognise this subtle light in others who possess it. It is charged with magnetic attraction and draws together persons of similar spiritual semblance. Were two such persons among a large company of people, they would quickly be drawn towards one another; and this phenomenon establishes the truth of the maxim 'Like attracts like.'

The sun is the master of the solar system. Life on earth depends entirely on solar radiation. Were there no sun there would not exist a vestige of life on this planet. The earth would be a frozen ball hurtling

on and on through the immensity of space; and so would the other planets until, perhaps, they become the satellites of another star. The sun can function without its family of attendant orbs; but they cannot function without the sun. The sun is the master of the solar system. Likewise God is Master of the Universe:

'Lord of all the worlds.' (1:2)

As the planets are dependent on the sun so everybody is dependent on God; and as the sun is not dependent on the planets so God is not dependent on anyone. The solar system reflects this great truth which has been emphasised in the Holy Quran:

'Independent and Besought of all.' (112:3)

The sun is different in structure to the planets which are continually revolving around it. The latter are great balls of rock and mineral while the sun is a sphere of burning gas. This fact reminds us that God is also different from His creation:

'And there is none like unto Him.' (112:5)

The sun is the only orb in the solar system which generates its own light. The other worlds merely reflect it. Similarly all divine light emanates from God and is reflected through His creation:

'Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. Light upon light Allah guides to His light whomsoever He will.' (24:36)

THE PLANETS

The Earth is one of the nine major planets revolving around the sun. They may be taken to symbolise the prophets for they are lit up by the light of the sun as the prophets are lit up with the light of God; and as the planets never deviate from their course of orbit so neither do the prophets deviate from the path of virtue:

'They speak not before He speaks, and they act only by His command.' (21:28)

'And it is not possible for a prophet to act dishonestly.' (3:162)

Prophets are raised for the guidance of mankind. They are spiritual leaders of the highest order. It is no more than rank defamation to censure them as manifest sinners. The authors of the various books of the Bible have gone beyond all limits of propriety in

attributing to them acts of drunkenness, adultery, and murder. It is utterly absurd to suppose that debauchers and criminals can inspire people to righteousness. Even an ordinary preacher would be ostracised by his community were he found engaged in less serious transgressions. Thank God for His Word, the Holy Quran, which has exculpated the prophets from the heinous charges heaped upon them in the Bible.

Each planet travels at a different speed according to the distance it is from the sun. The rule is that the nearer a planet is to the sun, the faster it travels. Similarly the nearer a person is to God, the faster he progresses spiritually.

METEORS

High up in space there are billions of meteors speeding around the sun. They have been described as the rubble and dust of the universe. The majority of them weigh no more than a grain of sand though some are considerably larger. Meteors are continually entering the earth's atmosphere from outer space; but no sooner do they enter than they burn up. The larger ones are often seen burning brilliantly as they fall towards the earth. What is generally called a shooting star is a meteor burning up as it flashes through the atmosphere. There is no such thing as a shooting star. It is a misnomer. Now and again large meteors reach the earth and they are distinguished as meteorites. Thousands of years ago a large meteor struck the Arizona desert leaving a crater 4,000 feet in diameter and several hundred feet in depth. The year of the Promised Messiah, 1908, was marked by the fall of a large meteor in Siberia:

"A meteorite probably weighing hundreds of tons struck the earth in the wilderness of Siberia (1908). This area was examined by a scientific expedition in 1928. The scientists reported that the tremendous heat of the meteorite had scorched and killed trees and other plant life for 30 miles around it." (World Book Encyclopedia)

The billions of small meteors may be taken to symbolise the human race. Every time we see a falling meteor speeding across the heavens in its fiery death throes we are reminded how easily man may fall from divine Grace. Let it bring to mind the necessity of our being ever watchful over our condition so that we may not also fall. None can afford to be complacent for even the mighty fall sometimes;

and this is as much true in the spiritual field as in the political field. Steadfastness is the backbone of faith. There have been many who at one time in their lives were ardent devotees of their faith; but in later years fervour and spirit diminished and they toppled to the dust like giant skyscrapers. Whenever we see a 'falling star' streaking across the night sky we would do well to meditate on the prayer:

"I seek refuge in Allah against the accursed devil."

None except those who have drunk deep from the cup of "Zanjabeel" (76:18) are immune from the influence of Satan. "Zanjabeel" means ginger and in the Holy Quran it has been used metaphorically to denote an extremely potent spiritual tonic which gives a believer power to overcome all difficulties and temptations.

BRIGHT STARS

Stars vary in brilliance. Some are so luminous that they are thousands of times brighter than the sun. The giant star Rigel is 18,000 times as bright as the sun; yet its brilliance would fade in the presence of Canopus which is eighty thousand times brighter than the sun. They may not seem to be so bright as we watch them twinkling in the distance; but the delicate astronomical instruments of the scientists reveal these facts.

Let us suppose each star is an individual of the human race. Some shine so brilliantly that they belong to a small category of their own; and these may be likened to the prophets and saints who appear now and again on the spiritual horizon.

The world is full of the persons who are known as stars: Stars of the screen, stage, and sport; and those society men and women who are regarded as social stars because of their poise or leading influence. But far and high above all of them are those who rank among the spiritual stars. It is true that they may not be recognised by the great majority of mankind; but they are recognised by God and that is what counts more than anything else.

Those who rank among the spiritual stars are persons of humble dispositions. In this century the most luminous of such stars was Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah. In fact, none has outshone him since the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him). The Word of God

descended upon him in abundance for in this age he was the elect of the elect. Despite his lofty and exalted office he was a personification of humility. Regarding himself he wrote in a poem:

*"I am a mere worm of the earth,
Not even fit to be called a human being;
For men an object of contempt."*

WHENCE THE UNIVERSE

As we endeavour to unravel the secrets of the universe, we are automatically confronted with the question how this voluminous mass of matter comprising innumerable solar systems came into existence. Man's concern is really limited only to that small dot of space which is occupied by our solar system; and in that dot is the tiniest of specks on which he lives. It has been said that a million times a million atoms makes a lump too small to see; and it may well be true that in relation to the size of the universe the world is no larger than an atom.

Once again let us try to picture the immensity of the universe. Our solar system is part of a gigantic galaxy of stars; and the Milky Way is only a part of it. Every star which can be seen with the naked eye is a unit of this galaxy; yet we are told by our leading astronomers that a trillion galaxies lie within range of our largest telescopes. That is to say a million times a million; and no one knows how many more trillions of galaxies lie beyond the range of the telescopes.

Whence came the universe? Before matter became moulded into globular shapes no doubt there was a time when it existed in a different and extenuated form; but in this treatise we are not dealing with the chemistry of the universe. We are concerned with the original cause behind the creation of matter; and we are assisted from the knowledge that something cannot be created from nothing. This is a self-evident fact which directs us to the conclusion that there must exist an omnipotent power.

The source from which matter originated has been a stumbling block to many astronomers and scientists. Patrick Moore, a well-known astronomer has said:

"...When we come to consider how the universe itself was created we run up against a blank wall."

Hoyle has also stated:

"Material simply appears—it is created. At one time the various atoms composing the material do not exist, and at a later time they do."

Neither of these erudites suggests that God is the Creator; possibly they are atheists. The Holy Quran assures us that God is the Creator of the universe and that He is Omnipotent:

"He is the Originator of the heavens and the earth. When He decrees a thing, He does only say to it, 'Be'; and it is." (2:118)

"Allah has the power to do all that He wills." (2:107)

Who is there who is not bewitched by the soft lustre of the moon? We are invited to take a stroll beneath the splendour of the heavenly canopy. The brilliant universe around us reflects the attributes of God—the Lord of all the worlds; and may we be reminded of them every time we raise our eyes to the starry heavens. Amen.

14. THE INNER UNIVERSE

*"All praise belongs to Allah the Lord
of all the Worlds."* (1:2)

The material or outer universe extends in all directions so far into the depths of space that the most powerful telescopes have not been able to reach its perimeter although they have located stars thousands of millions of light years away, bearing in mind that light travels at 186,000 miles per second. The immensity of the universe and the mysteries contained therein are beyond the comprehension of man.

"Allah knows all things, and you know not." (2:127)

Every star and planet in the universe is revolving on an orbital course. In our own solar system the earth and its eight accompanying planets are orbiting around the sun; and the gigantic galaxy to which it belongs is itself revolving as one mighty cluster of heavenly bodies at 600,000 miles per hour around a central point in space; and so wide is its orbital path that it completes only one revolution every 250 million years. This enormous galaxy which occupies such a vast area in space is only one of a trillion such galaxies lying within the range of the telescope. Fourteen centuries ago God revealed in the Holy Quran that every orb in space is in constant motion:

"All of them float in orbit...." (36:41)

Today the attention of the world is focused upon space exploration and the unravelling of the mysteries of the universe. While this is in no way to be condemned, it is unfortunate that man gives little thought and attention to the inner universe which exists not only within himself but far beyond into eternity. Vast and intriguing as the outer universe may be, it is but a temporary creation in which life thrives for a few fleeting moments. What is a score of years in the age of the universe? What is it compared with eternity?

"The benefit of this world is little and the Hereafter will be better for him who fears God; and you shall not be wronged a whit." (4:78)

"And worldly life is nothing but a sport and a pastime. And verily, the abode of the Hereafter is better for those who are righteous." (6:33)

Man has only scratched the surface of outer universal exploration. Similarly those who have studied and pondered over the wonders of the inner universe still find themselves on the threshold of their venture; but every little onward step unveils extraordinary realisations. A little progress produces a fruitful harvest of practical and nourishing truths.

The inner universe is governed largely by mental and spiritual conditions; and a comprehension of its deeper realms must remain obscure to a great extent for they exist in the life Hereafter about which man has little knowledge:

*"And no soul knows what joys of the eyes is kept hidden for them, as
a reward for their good deeds."* (32:18)

The above verse does not mean that man is kept totally ignorant about knowledge of the next life because the Quran explains many aspects of the Hereafter; and personal experiences can also open visions of understanding. Nevertheless, on this side of the dividing line man's knowledge remains extremely limited, although he may be conversant with a number of after-life truths.

There are invisible forces working within man. The conscious mind is generally unaware of their presence and their silent functions. Some lie latent like the energy within the atom; but when understood and aroused, explode with dynamic force magnetising the personality. These forces may be used for the better or for the worse; but the sensible and the God fearing man will direct them for the betterment of his body, mind and soul. Being gifts of God hidden in man, as precious minerals are hidden in the earth, the wise man will stimulate them and use them for the ultimate development of his soul which in the life to come will be the seed of his new spiritual body which will blossom forth on the Day of Resurrection.

A set of voluminous books dealing with the inner universe would still be able only to throw a little light on the subject. The writer does not pretend to be qualified to do justice to the subject, especially in so short a space, but he is only concerned in drawing attention to a few points which he considers to be of interest and value. Otherwise God alone is the one authority on the subject.

"Verily Allah knows the secrets of the heavens and the earth." (49:19)

Let us proceed to consider the following four bodies of man:

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. The Physical Body. | 2. The Mental Body. |
| 3. The Etheric Body. | 4. The Spiritual Body. |

PHYSICAL BODY

The physical body reflects the inner state of man and fulfills the truism 'As a man thinketh so he is.' It has been referred to as 'The temple of the soul,' and should therefore be kept clean both internally and externally, for 'Cleanliness is next to Godliness.' God says in the Holy Quran:

"And uncleanness do thou shun." (76:4)

"Oh ye who believe! When you stand up for a prayer, wash your faces and your hands up to the elbows, and pass your wet hands over your heads, and wash your feet to the ankles. And if you be unclean purify yourselves by bathing." (5:7)

There is also a maxim that 'Man is what he eats.' Inner cleanliness may be maintained by taking in such things that are strictly beneficial to the body and avoiding everything harmful. This may appear to be an obvious statement but due to ignorance and the unrestrained desire to satisfy the palate, man absorbs all kinds of unhealthy concoctions. Islam teaches that man should eat only good things:

"They ask thee what is made lawful for them. Say, all good things have been made lawful to you." (5:5)

The real self is not the physical body but an intangible inner creation which has the capacity of existing within and without of the body. The real self may be described as a combination of the mental, etheric, and soul bodies which function within the physical and which we shall now proceed to discuss.

MENTAL BODY

"Great thoughts reduced to practice become great acts."

(Hazrat Ali)

Thought is the mental body. All thought does not originate from the brain, though the latter plays an important function in the flow, stimulation, and regulation of this universal power.

Universal it is because every kind of creation and action is prompted by thought. All effects have their causes; therefore thought must have preceded the creation of matter; and as God is the Originator and Creator of the universe, the power of thought has been functioning as an attribute of God since the very beginning, before the universe was even created. Thought itself was behind the creation of the brain.

Here we are primarily concerned with two levels of thought:

- (a) Conscious thinking; (b) Subconscious thinking.

Conscious thinking is the process of thinking carried on in everyday life while subconscious thinking silently operates twenty four hours of the day deeper than the level of the brain's consciousness.

The subconscious mind governs all involuntary functions of the body. It is the subconscious which directs white corpuscles in the blood to assemble and attack disease germs wherever they enter the body. It is the subconscious which controls the activities of the digestive organs, kidney, heart, liver, and other internal organs. The power of the subconscious is so incredibly marvellous that when understood and properly instructed it will produce for man whatever, within reason, he commands. However inconceivable this may sound, it is a fact and no idle statement. Before proceeding let us remember the following Quranic prayer:

"O Lord, increase me in my knowledge." (20:113)

And the saying of the Holy Prophet: *"The acquisition of knowledge is incumbent upon every Muslim."*

The capacities of the subconscious mind are numerous, four of which will now be discussed:

- 1The subconscious is amenable to control by suggestion.
- 2The subconscious has the power to solve intricate and difficult problems.
- 3The subconscious is endowed with a perfect memory.
- 4The subconscious has control over the functions and conditions of the body.

The understanding and application of scientific laws leads to progress in many fields. We live in an age of scientific inventions and discoveries which serve as a boon to humanity. These laws of science are helpful to man not only for his material advancement but also for his spiritual elevation. The radio, for instance, is a medium of

imparting secular and religious education. Similarly there is the science of the mind which, when understood and applied, can be of inestimable value in the development of noble, uplifting, and spiritual qualities. This important point is being kept in mind while presenting this study on the working of the mind. It has already been stated that 'man is what he thinketh' which means that progress sprouts from the soil of thought:

"Man is made or unmade by himself in the armoury of thought where he forges the weapons by which he destroys himself; he also fashions the tools with which he builds for himself heavenly mansions of joy and strength."
(James Allen)

The subconscious mind may be likened to a fertile garden and the conscious mind as the gardener. Each thought which is properly impressed upon the subconscious will fructify like a seed and produce a corresponding expression in the personality; or attract any desired object providing it is not obviously beyond attainment. This is a law which never fails if the thought seeds are properly sown and nourished in the soil of the subconscious. The seed planted by the gardener needs sunshine, water, and manure to effect its successful growth; similarly the thought planted in the subconscious needs to be nourished with a strong desire, visualisation of the object desired, and confident faith in the ultimate realisation of the desired object. Then, as if by magic, the mental vision will become transmuted into its physical equivalent. Remember that the subconscious is amenable to control by suggestion. The creative power of the mind responds to every suggestion or command fed to the subconscious. It is a golden gift which God has implanted in man. It needs only to be recognised and awakened in order to render him immense service. It is man's most reliable servant. When the power of the subconscious is fully experienced, man can instruct it with carefree certainty and with instinctive knowledge that it will materialise the blueprint impressed upon it.

It is important to know that the mind can work both for and against a person. Positive thoughts produce positive results; negative thoughts produce negative results. Think success, you attract success; think failure, you attract failure. Think health, you attract health; think illness, you attract illness. Like attracts like. Man attracts to himself those things and conditions which harmonise with

his internal thinking.

The creative power of the subconscious mind lies within all awaiting to be tapped and directed. Through the aid to thought-control, man can alter his entire character. He is the gardener of his own mind and possesses the capacity to weed out all negative thoughts and in their place sow and cultivate their opposite kind which will automatically produce the flowers and fruits of a beautiful character. Self-mastery is the key to success.

This doctrine is not at variance with God's Omnipotence. It is true that God is All Powerful and that He can intervene when and where He wishes; but it is extremely rare that He does intervene in the operation of natural laws which He Himself created. A ball thrown into the air will fall to earth in obedience to the law of gravity. God certainly does possess the power to prevent the ball from falling and cause it to suspend stationary in the air; but unless there is a very special reason for showing such a miracle, God does not interfere with the working of natural laws. No doubt Abraham was thrown in a fire and God protected him from the flames so that he came forth unscathed; but this was a rare instance, otherwise fire always destroys. Similarly the law governing the creative power of the mind always works though it is agreed that God Almighty has the power to intervene for He is All Powerful and everything is subservient to Him.

The subconscious has the power to solve difficult and intricate problems. Answers have sometimes been flashed to the conscious mind in sleep or in leisurely moments during the day when the mind was not concentrating on the problem. It is well established that prior to falling asleep self-suggestion stimulates the subconscious in acting upon the suggestion passed to it because the creative power of the mind works best when the conscious mind is asleep, relaxed, or pleasantly occupied. It is not an uncommon thing for a person to fall asleep with a problem on his mind and to awaken with the solution. The subconscious mind is awake and active twenty four hours of the day even when the conscious mind is asleep. Successful results can be obtained by conveying guidance and instructions in a low voice to a sleeping person. Constructive suggestions on self-improvement, overcoming bad habits, etc., whispered over and over again into the ears of sleeping children can prove most fruitful. A father assisted his son in mastering a troublesome subject. The night before the final

examination he sat beside the bed of his boy and read aloud repeatedly that portion of his studies which he had difficulty in learning. The father reported that the following day the boy wrote a perfect paper. Learning while you sleep is a recognised system for speedily mastering subjects; and special tape recording equipment having a small extended loud speaker for placing under the pillow is available on the market and even used in certain educational institutions.

The principle can be put to valuable use keeping in mind the development of spiritual virtues. The subconscious mind responds to instructions while the conscious mind is sleeping. There are few persons who have not at one time or another consciously or unconsciously instructed their subconscious to awaken them at a fixed time and accordingly they woke at the right time.

The subconscious is endowed with a perfect memory. It has been conclusively established that the subconscious permanently records the minutest details of everything communicated to it through the five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. It may be likened to a tape recorder and a moving camera. Everything it sees, hears and senses is permanently registered.

The following experiments were carried out by an American doctor. A young man was asked to read several times a short item which appeared in the centre of the page of a newspaper. He was then asked to repeat what he had read. This he did fairly well but not accurately. He was next hypnotised and again asked to repeat the passage from memory. Not only was he able to do so absolutely correctly but he was also able to repeat word for word the contents of the whole page. Though he had been concentrating only on one small section of the page, his eyes had photographed the whole of the page upon his subconscious and under hypnosis he was able to recall every word even though he had paid conscious attention only to the small central paragraph. In another experiment a young woman was asked to walk past the window of a large department store and at the same time to take a quick side glance at the things on display. She had hardly time to glimpse into the window. When asked to enumerate the items she saw she protested that how could she be expected to do so as she had no more than a bare glimpse of them. However, under hypnosis, she was able to describe everything in detail that was on display.

The powers of the subconscious verge on the miraculous and the perfect memory of the subconscious makes it understandable how in the life to come man will find his whole life recorded in a 'wide open book.' God says in the Holy Quran:

"And every man's works have We fastened to his neck; and on the Day of Resurrection We shall bring out for him a book which he will find open. 'Read thy book. Sufficient is thine own soul this day as reckoner against thee'." (17:14)

This verse presents nothing extraordinary when it is seen that in this very life every detail of man's words and actions are recorded and preserved in his mind. There was a young lady who suddenly began to speak fluent Latin sentences although she had never studied the language. Investigation revealed that in her infancy she was sometimes in the presence of a latin scholar who would sometimes talk aloud in Latin. In later years those Latin sentences which had been indelibly recorded by the subconscious in her infancy returned to the lady's conscious mind and found verbal expression. In the light of this illustration it can be appreciated why Muslims recite azan (call to prayer) in the ears of a new born child.

The subconscious has control over the functions and conditions of the body. Mind is able to control matter and as self-control of the body is a cardinal virtue, it is well to know that the secret of its acquisition lies in thought control. God says in the Holy Quran:

"O you who believe, be patient and enjoin patience and be firm and fear God that you may prosper." (3:199)

"And bear patiently that which befalls thee." (31:17)

The subconscious is subject to control and not only from outside suggestion but also by self-suggestion wherein the individual impresses upon his subconscious the things, ideas, and conditions which he desires the creative power of his mind to transform into reality. The control of self is a much cherished and coveted goal and its attainment or progress in that direction lies in the proper management of the mind. The following everyday examples illustrate the power of thought over matter.

- (a) The arrival of a bad piece of news will cause digestion to cease, the blood vessels to contract, the heart beat to lessen, reduce respiration and affect the functioning of the body in many other ways.

- (b) Emotional thoughts cause physiological changes to take place in the body. Embarrassment causes blood to rush to the cheeks. Fear causes trembling and tension of the muscles. Anger and mental excitement increases heart beats and the output of adrenalin from the glands as well as other disturbances of the body.
- (c) Worry quickly devitalises the body of energy and lowers the respiration. It increases blood pressure, upsets digestion, causes sleeplessness, irritability, and headaches.

All negative thoughts involving depression, worry, anger, resentment, jealousy, hatred, etc., influence the body and affect health. These emotions cause glands to excrete poisons into the bloodstream. Man's general health depends not only on what he eats and does in the way of exercise but also largely on how he thinks.

In his book *"Life Understood"* F.L. Rawson mentions some interesting experiments of Professor Gates. The professor discovered that the change of mental state changed the chemical character of the perspiration which varied each time with the change of the mental state of the person. When the breath of a person was first tested by a certain procedure involving blowing through a cooled test tube, a colourless liquid resulted; but when he was made angry then his breath caused a sediment of brownish material to appear in the tube. Sorrow produced a grey material, remorse pink, etc. As with the experiment of the perspiration, each kind of thinking caused the system to expel its own kind of material. Later he collected sufficient of the brownish material to administer as a medicine and each time it created nervous excitability or irritability in the person. Another instance is mentioned of a strong healthy mother who had a baby which was also in perfect health. Something occurred which caused the mother to become violently angry which produced a poison in the system that found its way to the mother's milk and killed the infant.

The bedside manner of a doctor plays an important part in the reaction of his patients. His pleasant demeanour and confident attitude can charge the patient with recuperative energy and ultimate recovery without the aid of medicine. Patients have been given coloured water and sugar pills under the belief that they were receiving a wonder drug; as a result they have speedily recovered and credited the 'wonder drug' as the cause of their cure, whereas the

cure lay only in the mind's belief.

Two doctors carried out the following experiment to test the effects of imaginative thought. After several normal medicines had been given to patients in a ward the doctors suddenly had them informed that in error they had been given an emetic (medicine to cause vomiting) instead of their correct medicine. Within a short time many of the patients were vomiting.

There is the well known case of a condemned prisoner who was told that he would be executed by being bled to death. He was blindfolded, pricked, and informed that blood had started to flow. Warm water was trickled down his arm which he could hear dripping into a bowl on floor. The conversation of those present convinced the prisoner that he was becoming weaker from the loss of blood and it was not long before he died. This is a classic instance of the power of the mind over the body.

These are but a few of numerous illustrations which could be cited demonstrating the power of the mind over the body.

THE ETHERIC BODY

Since time immemorial there has been held the belief, based on personal experience, that in addition to the physical body man possesses a more subtle body which has the capacity of projecting itself out of the body. It is often referred to as the astral body. It is not the soul but rather it is the vehicle of the soul.

The etheric body withdraws from the physical body during sleep and unconscious conditions. It can also withdraw during wakefulness and semi-consciousness. These withdrawals are involuntary and spontaneous though some persons are able to project at will.

As the etheric body is the inner vehicle of the soul, it is natural to suppose that the soul accompanies it on those occasions when it is detached from the physical body. The Holy Quran teaches that while the soul is taken from the body at the time of death it is also taken during sleep:

"Allah takes away the souls of human beings at the time of death and during the sleep of those also that are not dead. And then He retains those against which He has decreed death, and sends back the others till an appointed term. In that are surely signs for a people who reflect."

(39:43)

Islam teaches that the soul must exist in and manifest itself through a body. A pertinent question that has arisen is in what body does the soul exist when it is taken away during sleep? The etheric body solves the question for it is, as it were, the home of the soul. An alternative answer could also be that the soul emanates around itself an aura and that it dwells within its spiritual haze.

An important fact to be known is that the etheric body and the soul are never completely detached from the physical body during their outer travels. They are linked by an intangible spiritual cord so, in fact, the etheric body and the soul are at no time completely separated from the physical body before death. This linking cord is sometimes called the astral cord and has been clearly observed by those who have out-of-the-body experiences. It may be likened to the umbilical cord uniting mother and infant even after it has left the dark world of the womb and entered the new outer world. The new born infant is freed from all connection with its mother on the severance of the umbilical cord. Similarly the etheric body and soul are completely and permanently freed from the physical body when the astral cord is severed. At other times the astral cord always unites the physical body with the etheric body when it is detached and projected from the former; and it is also the medium which draws back the etheric into the physical as, by way of illustration, the radio link between ground station and space ship brings back the latter to earth through remote control.

There is, therefore, a double counterpart in man which can move and travel out of his physical body and at the same time be normally conscious. While projected he can look down upon his physical body lying on the bed or wherever it may be. In his etheric body man can travel to far off places and verify the truth of this phenomenon by later describing in detail the place he visited although he had never visited the place in his life. Astral projection is no dream, illusion, or hallucination. The etheric body is wide awake and fully conscious when detached from the body, being able to see and hear what is taking place in the material world. Normally a person has no recollection of the outer journeys of his etheric body but it is not an unusual thing for a person to find himself separated away from his physical body and at the same time in his full wide awake senses; and he is able to remember this experience afterwards.

Astral projection is a subject which comparatively few people know anything about or are interested to investigate; and for this reason mention of the subject often gives rise to derision, skepticism, and outright rejection; but it should be remembered that there are millions of people throughout the world who do not believe in God. It is only natural, therefore, that this subject may be frowned upon as nonsense by the unenlightened. Since the dawn of advanced history out-of-the-body experiences have been experienced and recorded by numerous persons of various nationalities in different ages. It would be intransigence to deny this vast weight of testimony.

There are available some informative books on this subject. The following short list of excellent books published on this subject is given for the benefit of anyone wishing to make further investigation.

1. *The Projection of the Astral Body* by Sylvan Muldoon and Hereward Carrington.
2. *The Phenomena of Astral Projection* by Sylvan Muldoon.
3. *My Experiences While Out of the Body* by Cera L. V. Richmond.
4. *The Phenomena of Bilocation* by Earneste Bozzane.
5. *Techniques of Astral Projection* by Robert Crookhall.
6. *More Astral Projections* by Robert Crookhall.

Extracts from the testimonies of a few persons who have had out-of-the-body experiences and which have been recorded more fully in Sylvan Muldoon's "The Phenomena of Astral Projection" are now given.

Mrs. Devota Parker of Baltimore, U.S.A., wrote:

"My first experience was of a very short duration and occurred many years ago. I simply awoke early one morning and found myself standing in my room looking at my own physical body lying upon the bed in front of me, fast asleep."

Mrs. Vernice Atherton of St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.A., signed a document in which she wrote:

"I could see myself lying on the bed, and yet I knew I was not in that body. I was standing outside it and my father (died 2½ years before) who was standing beside me, as real as he had been in his earth life... Soon everything went black and in a few moments I was back in my

physical body again...I know I had been awake outside my physical self...I knew it had not been a dream, for I had been awake, and yet, knowing nothing of psychic phenomena, I did not really know what had happened to me."

A gentleman of Plymouth, England, who prefers to withhold his name has stated.

"I suddenly discovered that I was up above my body, looking directly down upon it. It was lying upon the bed as clearly as day. I had a good searching look at the face in particular, and thought how strange it was to be now looking at myself just as other people saw me... The experience was very real and definite indeed...nothing imaginary about it... I know that the experience was an actual fact."

A lady by the name of Vera M. Johnson affirms:

"Last winter I had a very queer experience.... One night, soon after I went to bed, I arose and stood by the side of the bed for several minutes, gazing down at myself lying there. Now this was no dream; I, the real I, actually got out of bed and saw my own physical body still on the bed. I then walked through the door and took a journey.... Since then I have on one occasion sent myself on a journey, leaving my physical self at home."

Mr. Walter E. McBride of Indian Springs, Indiana, U.S.A., has recorded:

"About eight o'clock on the evening of 23rd December, I went to my bedroom which is on the lower floor of my house. I blew out the lamp and retired, in the usual manner, feeling quite normal in every way.... The next thing I knew I was, preposterous as it sounds, floating in the room, but in a lighted atmosphere. I was wide awake at the time."

"I saw that I was floating upward through the building... the ceiling and the upper floor failed to stop me... I passed through them with ease. After reaching a certain height, I happened to turn upright, and, looking downwards, to my amazement I saw my body lying upon the bed, just as when I had retired..."

In an old copy of "The Occult Review" (1908, p.160) Dr. Franz Hartman wrote:

"In 1884 when I happened to be in Colombo, Ceylon, I was one day in

the company of my friend, at the office of a dentist for the extraction of a tooth. I inhaled chloroform, and was hardly under the influence when I found myself standing behind the armchair in which my body was reclining. I saw myself and felt precisely the same person as when in the normal state. I saw everything about me, and heard what was being said. But when I tried to touch the instruments on the little table near the armchair, I saw my fingers pass through them."

These few testimonies of out-of-the-body experiences have been selected to show that the existence of the etheric body is well established on personal experience in the same way that the existence of the subconscious mind, realm of dreams and various spiritual experiences have also been established. Out-of-the-body experiences have convinced many a skeptic that there is far more to life than temporary physical existence and done much to deepen faith in survival after death.

THE SOUL BODY

The soul is man's most precious possession which lives on into eternity passing from one to another stage of spiritual development. Although God has declared that in this life man's knowledge of the soul must remain extremely limited, nevertheless the Holy Quran which is the irrefutable Word of God—an ever open challenge to bishops, priests, atheists, or anyone else—throws more authentic light on the nature of the soul than any other scripture or book on the subject. As the Divine authority of the Holy Quran is quite an extensive subject it cannot be entered upon now.

According to the Quran the soul is born with the birth of the body. It does not enter the body from some outside realm where it pre-existed. It lies concealed in the seed of man and develops along with the body in the womb. God says in the Holy Quran:

"And We fashioned the sperm into a clot; then We fashioned bones out of this shapeless lump; then We clothed the bones with flesh; then We developed it into another creation. So blessed be Allah, the Best of creators."

(23:15)

Recognition of the true conception of God, right thinking and good actions combine together in producing the perfect nourishment on which the soul thrives. While care of the body is essential and

insisted upon by Islam, nevertheless, the care of the soul should hold uppermost thought in the mind. In other words it is better that a man should lose his life than to lose his soul.

The soul is a finer and more delicate body than the etheric body and it would appear that for a while after death it continues to dwell within the latter. The Quran teaches that there is an intermediate state where the soul exists from time of death until the Day of Resurrection which is the day when the soul will have grown and emerged as a new spiritual creation.

The intermediate state, or *Barzakh* in Islamic terminology, is not a place where the soul remains idle until the Day of Resurrection for there it is undergoing a new spiritual growth and transformation as does the seed of man in the womb of the mother. During this period of rebirth the soul is conscious and able to experience heavenly joys or hellish torments according to its spiritual condition at the time of death. Even in this life man can have a taste of heavenly or hellish life; but in *Barzakh* they will be felt more palpably; and even still more on the Day of Resurrection. Those who are negligent of their souls in this life should remember God's warning:

"On that day none can punish like unto His punishment." (89:26)

On the other hand peace and contentment is the reward of the righteous:

"And thou, O soul at peace Return to thy Lord well pleased with him, and He well pleased with thee. So enter thou among my chosen servants. And enter thou My Garden." (89:28,31)

There is no end to the journey of the soul. Once purified it continues to progress deeper and deeper into the heavenly universe; not on account of additional good deeds for the doing of good and evil ceases after death; but solely through the Grace of God. Concerning such souls God says:

"Their light will run before them and on their right hands. They will say, 'Our Lord, perfect our light for us and forgive us; surely thou hast power over all things.'" (66:9)

The face has been likened to the window of the soul. A truly pious person emanates a distinctive light which brightens and beautifies his features in a most attractive manner while the face of the unGodly

person portrays a dull and dark countenance. In the state of *Barzakh* this emanation is yet more apparent. This fact has been observed by persons who have had contact with the dead. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, has stated:

I have personal experience in this matter. Many a time when fully awake, I have seen many an evil doer and a wicked person with a body quite dark and smoky. I have personal acquaintance with these matters and I assert it strongly that, as Almighty God has said, everyone is granted a body either transparent or dark."

(Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam)

The more one reflects on the wonders of the inner universe the more does one realise the brevity of earthly existence and the wisdom of exercising one's faculties towards the achievement of life's goal which is the purification of the soul.

15. HABITUAL WORSHIP

*"Here lies a soldier, whom all must applaud;
Who fought many battles at home and abroad.
But the hottest engagement he ever was in,
Was the conquest of self in the battle of sin."*

Man has been created to fulfil a definite purpose:

"I have not created the jinn and the men but that they may worship me."
(51:57)

The worship of God is not limited only to formal prayer. It encompasses all thoughts, words and deeds which, when actuated with righteous intention, become acts of worship.

Worship of God is the purpose of existence. A Muslim may enjoy a worldly career such as an architect, doctor, teacher, lawyer, property agent, or businessman; but of immense more importance to him should be his spiritual career which will never shine as it should if he is more concerned in his attachment to worldly affairs.

Constant worship of God every moment of the day in the manner just described embodies the essence of Islam and is life's ideal for which a sincere Muslim seeks through God's help.

*"Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone do we implore for help.
Guide us in the right path."*
(1:5,6)

Islam teaches that the goal of life is self-purification for which every Muslim should strive with the most earnest devotion and resolve. He should endeavour to shed light in every step; in every word spoken and written; in every glance and every action. The Promised Messiah—the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement — says in one of his poems:

*"Everything
Thou hast in thy mind,
Every thought thou nourisheth,
Other than that of God
And of winning His approbation
Is an idol which thou worshippingeth."*

*O thou weak of faith
Beware of these hidden idols;
Guard well thy heart,
And keep it always
Out of their reach."*

Life is a battle but the fruits of victory are always sweet. Man has to conquer all kinds of temptations, lures of the world, negligence, carelessness and a host of imperfections. Final victory sometimes seems far away—almost out of reach; but God has promised success to those who persevere and this matter has been explained by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II in the following encouraging words:

"Islam rescues man from despair and tells him that he can, in spite of his errors and mistakes, attain to the purity of mind and conduct which is the highest goal of man. It thus encourages him to make constant efforts towards virtue and purity and enables him ultimately to arrive at this goal."

Worship of God is the best of habits; and all habits can be cultivated. A cultivated habit is soon executed with the aid of little or no mental attention under the direction and guardianship of second nature. The student typist in the early stages of training slowly finds and taps the letters with concentrated attention and even then makes numerous mistakes; but continued practice increases his speed and decreases his mistakes until eventually his fingers speed over the keyboard tapping out one hundred and twenty words a minute in a state of mental relaxation and with no apparent attention to the movement of his fingers. The subconscious has taken command.

Habits of worship can also respond to natural impulses after a period of proper attention. The person who strives to be patient and is diligent in practice will, after due course of time, display patience automatically under the most exasperating tests because this virtue of virtues has become ingrained in his very nature. In like manner all virtues can be developed if given the necessary earnest attention; and as the virtuous life and the Islamic life are synonymous, it behoves every Muslim to fulfil the object of his creation by worshipping God through the cultivation of all virtues.

Nothing worthwhile can be achieved without effort, and the law holds good in matters of faith. God helps those who help themselves

and He expects—in fact demands—Muslims to exert themselves in virtue even to the extent that they should endeavour to excel one another in virtue and steadfastness:

“Be steadfast and strive to excel in steadfastness.” (3:200)

The purpose of man's existence has been clearly pointed out in the Holy Quran. Its attainment necessitates a willing readiness to adopt all ways and means in winning the pleasure of God and in avoiding His displeasure. No doubt the way is an uphill path but it is the most rewarding of all undertakings. Worship of God is characterised by submission to God which is a prerequisite for winning the pleasure of God:

*“And who is better in faith than he who submits himself to Allah.”
(4:126)*

The Promised Messiah expressed in strong and unequivocal words the proper significance of Islamic worship and called upon his followers to adhere strictly to the tenets of Islam otherwise in no real sense could they call themselves Muslims and followers of him. He went to the extent of warning his followers that even if there existed an atom of worldliness in their hearts their souls were in jeopardy. Not everyone is in the same spiritual status; but the fire of ambition to overcome satanic obstacles and advance higher towards God should always burn in the heart of a Muslim in whatever stage he may be; and as long as this spirit is alive then his sincere endeavours may, through God's Grace and Mercy, atone for any shortcomings yet to be conquered. The Promised Messiah has said:

“God's Will and His pleasure should be the supreme thought in your mind. God's pleasure and his displeasure should serve as motive power for all our actions...”

This is the kind of life in which lies real prosperity. Although Muslims have been blessed with the Holy Quran for guidance yet so many are mainly concerned in the mad rush for money, mistakenly or foolishly thinking that prosperity lies in affluence whereas if they had true love and faith in their hearts for Islam they would seek prosperity where it really lies:

“Verily he truly prospers who purifies himself, and remembers the name of his Lord and offers prayers. But you prefer the life of this

world, whereas the Hereafter is better and more lasting.” (87:15-18)

The Promised Messiah has emphasised the importance of wholehearted devotion to God:

“Turn wholly and solely to Him in that you lose interest in this world.”

While we have to live in this world, nevertheless, we should not allow the greed and love for material wealth and pleasures to override our spiritual obligations. Life in this world is a fleeting existence. It comes and goes like a dream. The physical body is an evanescent shell containing the eternal self—the soul. Yet through his foolhardiness or ignorance, man is more interested in his material welfare than in his spiritual welfare.

The Promised Messiah has been raised in this age among the Muslims to rekindle love for Islam in their hearts and to invite all mankind into its fold. The Promised Messiah successfully laid the foundation of his divine mission and in order to present the message and spiritual efficacy of Islam he commissioned his followers to mould their lives and conduct wholeheartedly in conformity with the true teachings of Islam and thereby practise habitual worship.

16. ROLE OF AN AHMADI

An Ahmadi is a Muslim who believes that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, was the Promised Messiah and Mahdi whose advent had been foretold by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) and by earlier prophets including Jesus. Nevertheless, this is merely a theoretical acclamation and in itself is no more than a label.

The Promised Messiah was a Messenger of God. He called upon all mankind to accept the truth of his divine office; but this was not all: Islam, he declared, was a practical way of life which demanded total resignation to the teachings of the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him). The attainment of this ideal must be the resolve and goal of every Ahmadi in whose life the principles of Islam should be manifested in every manner of living. The Promised Messiah declared:

"The real object of man's life according to the Holy Quran is, therefore, a true knowledge and worship of God and a total resignation to His Will that whatever is said or done is said or done for His sake only."

"What is Islam? It is the burning fire which consumes all low desires and, setting fire to false gods, offers our life, property and honour as a sacrifice before God."

(Philosophy of the Teaching of Islam)

An Ahmadi is expected to demonstrate his love for God and the Holy Prophet by moulding his life in strict accordance with the teachings of Islam. He does not allow the lure of material wealth and comforts to override his spiritual obligations and responsibilities. His first and foremost thought is to regulate his conduct in accordance with the will and pleasure of God.

The Promised Messiah was not concerned solely in clarifying points of theoretical dispute such as the meaning of *Khatamun Nabuwat*, death of Jesus, Miraj, life after death, etc. Notwithstanding the importance of these subjects, the ultimate purpose of his mission was the reformation of mankind through the recognition and

resignation to Islam.

The distinctive characteristic of an Ahmadi should be his undivided and consummated attachment to Islam; and this devotion should control his life to such an extent that the slightest deviation from God's laws is abhorrent to him. The Promised Messiah stated that if there is as much as an atom's weight of worldliness in the behaviour of an Ahmadi, he cannot be counted as his true follower. That is to say, no law or principle of Islam should be trampled upon or neglected in order to satisfy some worldly interests or inclinations. An Ahmadi is expected to reflect not only the basic teachings of Islam but also the finer aspects of faith which others may overlook as unimportant.

An Ahmadi is:

1. A soldier of Islam
2. An ambassador of Islam
3. A preacher of Islam
4. A servant of Islam
5. A defender of Islam
6. An embodiment of Islam

SOLDIER OF ISLAM

A soldier has many traits. Among them is his ability to serve and fight under the most hazardous conditions. He exerts his energies to the full for his flag and country.

An Ahmadi is a soldier of God dedicated to the flag of Islam and the fight for the defence and propagation of his faith through peaceful means.

As a soldier he is not a sit-at-home Muslim. He goes forth in all directions wielding his spiritual sword. He is not deterred by the heat of the sun, snow and icy winds, downpours of rain or other discomforts when beckoned by the call of duty.

The readiness to undergo severe hardships for the love of Islam is a sign and test of true faith. An Ahmadi takes inspiration from the great lives of those who have gone down in history as pioneers and stalwarts of glory. He is anxious to imbibe and cultivate their

inspiring qualities in order to enable him to fight more effectively for Islam.

AMBASSADOR OF ISLAM

An Ahmadi has a grave and privileged responsibility for he is a representative of the Promised Messiah whose advent in the latter days had been foretold by the Holy Prophet of Islam.

The Promised Messiah entreated his followers to be practical Muslims in every detail. An Ahmadi should by a worthy ambassador of Islam and enthusiastically endeavour to adhere to all its teachings.

It has truly been said that faith without works is dead. Knowing this an Ahmadi endeavours to be meticulous in living up to the teachings of Ahmadiyyat (True Islam). The eyes of the world are upon him; but of greater consequence is the fact that the eyes of God are also upon him.

An ambassador faithfully symbolises the government which he represents; so must an Ahmadi faithfully symbolise the teachings he represents.

PREACHER OF ISLAM

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace be on him) was a prophet of God commissioned with a divine message for all mankind. It is incumbent upon every Muslim to preach his faith to others; also, when the occasion arises, to guide and advise his own Muslim brothers. Thus in the Holy Quran Muslims are enjoined to exhort one another to truth.

The Ahmadiyya Movement works to convey and expound the message of Islam to everybody and to hasten the coming of the day when Islam will be the dominant faith of the world.

An Ahmadi is a missionary of Islam. He preaches to all and sundry; and in order to do this successfully he must practise what he preaches. This he well knows because it is the epitome of Quranic teaching and so becomes the most necessary of all requirements in the mission field.

SERVANT OF ISLAM

An Ahmadi is a servant of God. A good servant is imbued with two outstanding qualities:

1. He is respectful
2. He is obedient

Respect for God and his creatures is an essential aspect of the Islamic faith. God is the Master of masters, worthy only of the highest respect and love. The creatures of God are the creation of God and must, therefore, be given due respect.

Being a servant of God, an Ahmadi is obedient to God. He is extremely careful in observing the commandments of God and ever watchful in avoiding His displeasure. He is regular in *Namaz* and observes those fasts required by law. He pays *Zakat* and other dues required by Islamic law. He also contributes in accordance with instructions and recommendations of the Promised Messiah and Khalifas. He completely shuns gambling, dancing, wine, pork, lending money on interest, lying, backbiting, cheating, and other forbidden things. Obedience to God is always his watchword.

DEFENDER OF ISLAM

Islam is assailed on all sides by its adversaries who through ignorance or prejudice endeavour to smear the fair name of Islam. Islam is, perhaps, the most misrepresented faith.

An Ahmadi educates himself in Islam not only for his own guidance and upliftment but also that he may be able to defend Islam against its critics.

It is asserted that Islam is a man made religion bereft of true spiritual values. On the contrary an Ahmadi illustrates in his own life that Islam is a living religion which can beautify and purify the soul and character of a person.

An Ahmadi strives to build an exemplary character for this, more than anything else, is able to prove the spiritual efficacy of Islam.

An Ahmadi defends Islam best by living Islam.

EMBODIMENT OF ISLAM

An Ahmadi is a Muslim whose mind has been opened to wonderful spiritual truths which remain hidden to others. These truths have impressed themselves so deeply upon him that he finds his only solace in the bosom of God. Being human he possesses natural attachments of love for his family, relatives, and friends; but despite the ardour of these relationships he never forgets his loyalty to God.

When an Ahmadi has become in the true sense a soldier, ambassador, preacher, servant, and defender of Islam then, and then alone, does he blossom into an embodiment of Islam whereupon, according to the Promised Messiah:

"God becomes his eye with which he sees, his tongue with which he speaks, his hand with which he repels attack, his ear with which he hears, and his foot with which he walks."

(Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam)

ALL PRAISE IS DUE TO ALLAH THE LORD OF ALL THE WORLDS

Some of the chapters of this book have previously been featured as articles in various editions of the *Muslim Herald*, including one which appeared in the *Review of Religions*.

LIFE SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

Bashir Ahmad Orchard was born in Torquay on the south coast of Devon on April 26, 1920. His father was a doctor and his mother had worked as a nurse prior to her marriage. He had two elder brothers. The eldest was killed during World War II and the other is a Roman Catholic Priest.

He and his brothers attended Winchester Lodge Preparatory School where he played both cricket and football. He never enjoyed school and wasn't a bright pupil so he left school at age sixteen without any kind of educational certificate.

Finding himself at loose ends after quitting school, he joined the army even though he was two years younger than the minimum age requirement of eighteen. He found life in the army unpleasant and did not find congenial companionship as he had been brought up in a more cultured society. After serving two of the seven year enlistment, he wrote his father asking him to purchase his discharge. This was the only way of terminating his service and his father promptly came to his rescue.

After his discharge, he joined a Territorial Unit of the Royal Medical Corps. They were part-time soldiers who normally did not have to train more than one evening a week. When Britain declared war on Germany in 1939 he again became a full-time soldier. In 1941 he applied for a commission in the Indian Army. He was accepted as a cadet and sailed for India in 1942.

The year 1944 was a time when deeper spiritual inclinations seemed to awaken within Orchard. Several things happened to him to encourage these awakenings. One event happened while he was serving in the trenches close to the Assam-Burma border. At one point, during a battle, he was called away from his position by a senior officer. During that brief period a shell landed in the trench on the spot which he had just vacated. Two sepoy who had been near him were killed.

It was also during this time that an Ahmadi havildar clerk who was serving in his unit decided to introduce him to the message of Islam.

The clerk's name was Abdul Rahman Dehlvi. He arranged for a copy of the *Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam* by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to be sent to Orchard from Qadian. Though Orchard's spiritual senses were exceedingly dull in those days and he found much of its contents difficult to comprehend, parts of it inspired him and uplifted his spirits.

When he was given a two week leave, he decided at the urging of Dehlvi, to visit Qadian. After a week of travel he reached the small isolated town of Qadian. As no one knew when he would arrive, he was not met at the station and it was necessary for him to hire a ride to the home of Mufti Mohammad Sadiq where he was to stay. Mufti Mohammad Sadiq was a companion of the Promised Messiah—Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad—and also the first Ahmadi missionary to the United States of America.

He stayed in Qadian for two days. The highlight of his visit was an audience with Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad—the Khalifa and Supreme Head of the Ahmadiyya Movement. Orchard describes this meeting in the following words:

I was impressed by his luminous countenance which radiated an intangible spiritual light which seemed to shine from the windows of another world. He scintillated heavenly light and, as he spoke, a charming smile animated his face. He was an embodiment of energetic repose radiating physical, intellectual and spiritual magnetism which captivated all within his presence. I realized that I was in the company of no ordinary person.

Orchard was generally impressed by everyone he met. This is what attracted him to Islam more than anything else. While his knowledge of Islam was negligible, he reasoned that if these persons were the fruits of the faith, then it certainly had something to offer. Shortly after his visit to Qadian, he decided to accept Ahmadiyyat—the True Islam.

Orchard was a heavy drinker and smoker. He also gambled extensively, once losing an entire month's pay gambling on cards. He gave up drinking and gambling immediately as a result of accepting Islam. Smoking was the most difficult for him to overcome

but he believes that the physical and spiritual benefits gained from discarding that obnoxious habit have been immense.

Prior to his acceptance of Ahmadiyyat, Orchard contributed nothing in the way of God towards charity. Islam taught him the philosophy of giving in the way of Allah. He commenced by paying one-sixteenth of his income and later increased it to one-tenth. Finally, in 1967, he commenced paying one-third and has been doing so ever since. In addition to this he also regularly gives *Tehrik-i-Jadid* and *Ansar* contributions plus payments towards various other appeals.

Ahmadiyyat introduced Orchard to the regular observance of prayers. This proved a source of great blessing and comfort to him, testifying to the truth of the Qur'anic verse: "*It is only in the remembrance of Allah that hearts can find comfort.*"

One of the ways that God communicates with His creation is through dreams. Many times dreams are very vivid and one remembers them distinctly. Orchard also had a few such dreams. In one of them, he saw the Supreme Head of the Ahmadiyya Movement who told him: "In order to live a successful life, you must not let sorrows affect you. And there's no doubt about it."

When the war ended in 1945, Orchard returned to England and was immediately demobilized. He visited his mother for a couple of days and then traveled to London in search of the London Mosque where he introduced himself to the Imam—Maulana J.D. Shams. He expressed his desire to work with the mission and also to dedicate his life completely to the service of Islam. This event has been described by Maulana Shams:

After his release from the army, when he arrived in England he stayed for two days only at Bristol with his relatives and so on the third day he was at the mosque in London. During his conversation with me he expressed his willingness to live at the mosque and become a Muslim missionary. I explained to him the responsibilities of a missionary and the required qualifications for missionary work. Eventually I promised him to see to his case sympathetically and would write to him on this matter. He was a little bit upset from my reluctance in accepting his offer

readily. After a few days, however, he dedicated his life for the service of Islam unconditionally like other *waqifeen*. I sent his application to Hazrat Amirul Momineen with my opinion that he might be a useful missionary. I asked him to come and stay with us and to begin the study of Islam. Hazrat Amirul Momineen graciously accepted his waqf and Orchard began to work with other missionaries.

(Review of Religions, June 1947)

Allah works in mysterious ways. He willed that this insignificant individual should become the first European Ahmadi Muslim missionary. The following words of counsel were delivered to Orchard by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II:

At this time you are unknown, no doubt, and unheard of, but soon the time is coming when nations will feel proud of you and sing your praises. So mind, you do not take lightly what you say and what you do. Do not think that your movements are only personal, no, but they pertain to the whole British nation. The posterity will imitate your movements and follow them to the letter...If your movements and activities will be in accordance with Islam, and noble and grand, then they will be instrumental in raising the moral tone of your nation, but if they are below the mark and not in strict accordance with Islam, your nation will be the loser thereby. Try, therefore, to set a noble example for posterity, otherwise God will have another man to fulfil this task. When Ahmadiyyat will have spread all over the world, and spread it must, no power on earth can impede its destined progress, then there will be reverence for you in the hearts of the people, greater than the one which they have for the greatest of the Prime Ministers.

(Review of Religions, June 1947)